

Chile, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador have seen the realisation of this possibility. It is in the interests of the people of the US to co-operate with such autonomous national projects, seeking to participate in the development of a more just, democratic, and sustainable world-system. This is the way to overcome the structural crisis of the world-system and to respond to the challenges that humanity today confronts.

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United States Imperialism, 19th Century

During the 19th century the US was transformed from a nation mostly hugging the Atlantic coast to an empire stretching across a continent with possessions in the Caribbean and Pacific. Despite the scale of US expansion, at no point was it an inevitable Manifest Destiny. Almost every imperial venture was

met with resistance, both from those on the periphery being annexed and from people in the metropole who were opposed to a particular takeover. Some scholars see strong continuity throughout the century, arguing that the motivations and strategies used to suppress Filipino insurgents were in accord with those used to conquer Mexican territory and subdue Indian tribes. Other scholars emphasise the distinctiveness of different phases of American imperialism, arguing that specific political and economic contingencies determined whether the US was able to assert control over a territory such as Texas in 1846 or Hawaii in 1898. This essay will deal with the continuities and ruptures at play in American imperial expansion, with the 19th century broken up into three periods: 1800–36, 1836–65, and 1865–98.

Jefferson's 'empire of liberty' (1800–36)

In 1800 the US was one empire among many in North America. To the north, the British controlled Canada. In the west, the US faced two imperial competitors, as Spain ruled Mexico (including much of what would become part of the US in the 1846–48 Mexican War), and France had managed to regain Louisiana Territory. To the south, European powers had carved up the Caribbean, and throughout the century American leaders anxiously watched for an opportunity to grab some of these island possessions for themselves. France was eliminated as a major competitor in North America when it sold its territory to the US in the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. For a little over \$11 million, the American empire gained over 800,000 square miles. President Thomas Jefferson recognised this as a major windfall for what he sometimes called an 'empire of liberty', but the purchase also highlighted anxieties over imperial consolidation that would continue throughout the century (Onuf 2000: 3–9). Although most Americans lived in the eastern states, the population of the western territories grew quickly; how to exert influence over such a vast territory was a constant concern among national leaders. The US had been created out of a colonial periphery resentful of an imperial metropole, and many of the former revolutionaries worried that westerners would develop the same

of rebellious attitude towards the east (Onuf 2005: 43–45).

The territorial system

American empire building was a mix of public and private initiative, with governmental authority promoting the spread of settlers. Key to this project was how new territories were politically organised. In the territorial system, the federal government shaped local institutions and had ultimate authority over the populace. Local power cliques of landowners, merchants, and lawyers developed within the territories, but those cliques derived power from their connections with federal officials. The western territories relied on federal law to substantiate their property claims, and on federal troops to protect them from other empires or Native Americans. In the control that it exerted by appointing governors and providing protection, the federal government was following a tradition inherited from the relationship of Britain to its colonies.

The difference between the two relationships was that the territorial system ended in statehood. When the population of an organised territory reached 60,000, the territorial legislature could apply for statehood. The governments and constitutions of these new states tended to be modelled on those of states that had already been admitted, in part because congressional approval was required before a territory could be granted statehood. Once admitted into the Union as a state, a former territory would legally have the same privileges and sovereignty as any other state. In reality, the western states often resented the amount of political and economic strength that the eastern states held over them, but this resentment was rarely large enough to break ties built in the territorial stage (Eblen 1968: 18–23).

This imperial expansion was especially striking given the tiny size of American military forces for most of the century. Fear of standing armies had deep resonance within American culture, with most Americans afraid that a large army would subvert republican institutions. During a conflict such as the American Civil War the military would expand, but it would swiftly contract once the specific war was over. Often imperial missions, such as expeditions against native tribes, were not undertaken by the regular army, but by citizen militias within

a given state or territory. Full political citizenship was tied to the potential to serve in the militia, and the exclusion of particular groups, such as women and blacks, from militia service was often used as an argument to exclude them from the ballot box as well.

Imperial fits and starts: the War of 1812, Spanish Florida, and the Monroe Doctrine

Many Americans looked to the north as an obvious place to expand the American empire. Resentment towards Great Britain remained strong after the War for Independence, and many hoped to push England off the continent for good. Part of the Continental Army had invaded Canada during the War for Independence, and after war was declared on England in 1812, Americans tried invading again, with no more success than their armies had had in 1775; Canadians had little desire to join the US. Even French Canadians, who often resented the imperial authorities of London, saw the US as a cultural empire deeply hostile to Catholicism (Taylor 2010: 15–30). America's first 19th-century attempt at conquering the territory of another empire failed, and the Treaty of Ghent in 1815 restored the antebellum borders between the two empires. Despite this, many Americans throughout the 19th century, particularly northerners, hoped that annexation of Canada would be only a matter of time. Surrounding Canada was one intention of Secretary of State William Seward's 1867 treaty to purchase Alaska from Russia; Seward and others believed that the economic ties between the US and Canada made annexation inevitable.

The War of 1812 failed to remove an imperial competitor from the continent, but American leaders continued to try to find opportunities to pick off new territory, often with the aim of securing their borders. In 1817–18, General Andrew Jackson seized much of Florida from Spain during his campaign against the Seminole Indians. Jackson and others argued that the decaying Spanish Empire had failed to police Florida, which had become a haven for criminals, hostile Indian tribes, and runaway slaves. Members of the federal government debated how to respond to Jackson's extra-legal venture. Pressured by the US, Spain sold the territory through the Adams–Onís Treaty negotiated in 1819 (Eblen 1968: 5).

The US not only tried to expand at the expense of other empires, but also acted to dismantle those empires in the hemisphere.

With the Monroe Doctrine, set out in 1823, the US proclaimed that it would prevent any European attempt to reassert control over the former Spanish and Portuguese territory that had won independence. Despite such an ambitious warning to European powers, the US lacked the economic and military might to enforce such a policy of non-interference. There were also limits to what types of revolution in the Western Hemisphere the US would embrace. When the slaves of Haiti achieved independence from France in the first decade of the century, the US failed to recognise the nation until the American Civil War. Although it claimed to be an empire of liberty, much of the empire had reason to fear the encouraging of a slave revolt (White 2010).

Native American resistance and adaptation in the early republic

Although the 1815 Treaty of Ghent restored a territorial balance between two North American empires ruled by whites, it undercut the power of Indian tribes in the north-west and south-west to negotiate their way through imperial squabbles. Since long before American independence, Indian groups such as the Iroquois Confederacy had retained their position through playing European empires off each other. For example, neither France nor Britain was able to gain hegemony in the Great Lakes region during the 17th century, and therefore both were forced to co-operate with a variety of Indian tribes (White 1991: 50). This worked as long as one imperial power was unable to assert a monopoly of power over an area without being checked by another.

In the north-west this balance was already breaking down in the years preceding American independence, as Britain had pushed France out of Canada in 1763 and more and more settlers penetrated the west. Most Indian tribes who involved themselves in the struggle between England and her colonists fought for the British, realising that an American empire would promote settlement expansion at the cost of Indian land. After the War for Independence, many north-west Indian tribes continued to resist American expansion, winning victories against the regular US army in Harmor's Campaign in 1790 and St Clair's Defeat in 1791. Still, by the 1800s the north-west tribes were outgunned and vastly outnumbered by American settlers. Some Indian leaders such as Tecumseh

of the Shawnee hoped to re-establish the old balance-of-power system, this time with the US and Britain taking the roles that France and Britain had previously filled. In the War of 1812, most of the north-west tribes again fought for Great Britain, and again they found themselves let down by how little their imperial allies were willing to support them. Tecumseh died fighting American troops at the Battle of the Thames in 1813, and soon after this many of the Indians in his alliance surrendered. After the war, the capacity of the north-west Indians to slow down American expansion was greatly reduced (Taylor 2010: 203–235).

Native reaction to American expansion was not monolithic, and military resistance was only one method by which Indian tribes negotiated their position within the American empire. Americans' positions on the status of Indian tribes within the empire were equally diverse. Western politicians usually took the harshest line, advocating that Indian tribes were an alien influence that should be pushed as far west as possible and that the land that Indians occupied rightfully belonged to settlers. Others argued that Indians did not need to be destroyed, but should be 'civilised' to the point at which they took on the ways of American farmers. President Jefferson himself embodied this ambivalence towards Indians, in that he lauded the possibility of their mixing and becoming blended into white society, while at the same time holding that Indians who resisted such assimilation would have to be destroyed (Wallace 1999).

Some tribes tried to strike a balance between accommodation and tribal integrity, including the so-called Five Civilized Tribes who resided in the south-west: the Cherokee, the Chickasaw, Choctaw, the Seminoles, and the Creek. The Cherokee, who lived primarily in what is now north-west Georgia, adopted many of the cultural badges of southern white society, including a written language, Christianity, republican government, settled agriculture, and slave-owning.

This accommodation did not stop Georgian settlers from demanding their land. One by one the civilised tribes were forced to move west into Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). By the 1830s squatters found support from both the Georgia legislature and the administration of President Andrew Jackson. For years Cherokee leaders such as Chief John Ross tried to maintain their awkward position within the empire not through military

resistance, but through court appeals. In the 1832 Worcester v. Georgia decision, the Supreme Court under Chief Justice Marshall ruled that the sovereignty of the Cherokee deserved federal protection. President Jackson ignored the ruling and supported the Treaty of New Echota, which agreed to the selling of Cherokee land, even though the document was signed by only a small number of tribal members unelected to political office. In the resulting Cherokee diaspora, also known as the 'Trail of Tears', several thousand Cherokee died on their way to Indian Territory (Burbank and Cooper 2010: 268).

Historians favouring Jackson have held that although the Trail of Tears was tragic, there was little a small federal government could have done in the wake of waves of private US citizens moving into Cherokee lands (Remini 2001: 279–281). However, the mix of private initiative and public support was indicative of US imperialism during the 19th century. Like any imperial venture or consolidation of the time, American society was divided on whether or not to support it. Other than in the Supreme Court, the Cherokee found allies among many northerners, including clergymen who hated the idea that a Christian tribe could be targeted for removal. Even some westerners protested against the seizure of Cherokee land, including Congressman David Crockett, who broke with his former ally Andrew Jackson over the issue. The removal treaty itself was passed in the Senate in May 1836 by only a single vote. Just as there was a continual impulse of imperial venture throughout the century, so was there a continual anti-imperialist tradition.

Slavery's imperial reach (1836–65)

For much of the 19th century, sectional divisions between North and South shaped imperial expansion. At the start of the century, most Americans believed that slavery was a dying institution. The cotton boom changed that. New technological developments like the cotton gin allowed new types of cotton to be grown far away from the coastline. At the same time, demand in Northern and European textile industries increased the profit in producing cotton. Slavery went from being viewed by Southerners as a necessary but dying evil to being seen as a system responsible for the US's most valuable commodity. Although most Northerners and Southerners in the early

part of the century agreed that slavery was to be handled on a state level, the federal territorial system meant that slavery's fate was at stake each time Congress supervised the construction of a new area's institutions. With the change of each new territory into a state, the sectional balance between free and slave changed. The Missouri Crisis in 1820 brought sectional politics to the fore, and the compromise reached provided a line to divide the empire between free and slave territory. From then on, any new imperial acquisition would bring with it the potential of undermining the sectional compromise.

Settler imperialism: Texas and the US–Mexican War

Many Southern settlers brought their slaves with them when they moved into the Mexican territory of Texas. At first the Mexican authorities encouraged Americans to settlers the sparsely populated north, but they soon realised that the numerous white immigrants were a threat to their control of the region. In 1836 Texas declared independence, with most of the revolutionaries hoping for annexation by the US. Texas won its war, although Mexico refused to recognise the new government. For a decade Texas was an independent country, and during this time annexation was frequently debated in Congress.

In 1844, the Democrat James Polk ran for president on a platform urging the need to both annex Texas and put the majority of the Oregon territory (also claimed by the British) under the American flag. Soon after his election, Texas was officially annexed by the US. US troops under General Zachary Taylor were sent to secure the new border, which Polk had decided was at the Rio Grande. The resulting US–Mexican War (1846–48) ended in US victory as federal armies occupied north and central Mexico, including Mexico City. Although the US won nearly all the conventional battles against the Mexican army, the invading armies faced resistance from Mexican guerrillas and Indian tribes as the war continued.

Although the war had started as a means to annex Texas, the territorial ambitions of President Polk increased further as the US troops moved further into Mexico. In cabinet meetings there was even talk of annexing all of Mexico. Unfortunately for Polk, the emissary whom he had sent to Mexico City to dictate a peace, Nicolas Trist, became more and

more disgusted with the war and more sympathetic towards the Mexican people (Greenberg 2012). From the cables that Trist sent back to Washington, Polk realised that Trist was no longer his man. He recalled him, but Trist refused to leave Mexico before he had finished negotiating the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The treaty specified that for \$15 million, the US would gain Texas, California, and most of the territory that would eventually become Colorado, Arizona, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, and Nevada, but would not annex most of the Mexican territory that the US army now occupied. Polk thought of rejecting the treaty, but growing opposition to the war forced him to recognise that there was little political profit in continuing the war with Mexico.

Even before the war had concluded, Americans were deeply divided about what to do with the newly conquered territory. In August of 1846, Congressman David Wilmot, a member of Polk's party and not in principle opposed to the war, added a proviso to a war bill declaring that slavery would not be permitted to spread to territories conquered from Mexico. Controversy exploded over the bill: Southerners attacked it as undermining the property rights vital to an empire of liberty, while Northerners jumped on Southern opposition to the proviso as evidence that the war had been started only as a way to further the power of slaveholders.

Filibusters in the Caribbean and Central America

After the Mexican War, Manifest Destiny took on a sectional character. Slaveholders worried that they were becoming demographically outnumbered by the population of the free states. The only way to maintain influence over the federal government was to take new territory and reintroduce slavery to those places. Throughout the 1850s groups of individuals known as filibusters raised private military expeditions in attempts to conquer new areas in Latin America, including northern Mexico. Even on the eve of the Civil War, the Texan governor, Sam Houston, seriously considered leading an army into northern Mexico in order to project US power (May 1973).

Filibusters usually hoped that the American flag would follow their new private conquests. Texas served as a model, and Central America and the Caribbean were often the targets of these pro-slavery ventures. In 1856, the American adventurer William Walker invaded

and became dictator of Nicaragua for a short time, before an alliance of neighbouring powers along with Nicaraguan opposition overthrew him. Not to be dissuaded, the would-be king returned to the US to raise money and armies. Walker tried on two other occasions to retake Nicaragua, eventually being captured and shot by his supposed subjects. Throughout the South, slaveholders and politicians praised filibusters like Walker.

Cuba was another target for possible expansion of US slavery. By the 1850s, it was one of the few places in the Western hemisphere (along with the US and Brazil) where slavery was still permitted. Many Southerners hoped to annex the island before the Spanish Empire was pressured by the British to abolish slavery. The 1854 Ostend Manifesto, written by US diplomats including the future president James Buchanan, argued that the US should make every effort to buy Cuba from Spain. The diplomats went further. If Spain was unwilling to sell Cuba to the US, then the US should not exclude military takeover of the island (May 2002: 54). The failure of these filibuster movements in the 1850s is a testament less to delusional fantasy than to the determined resistance from the peoples in places such as Nicaragua, combined with a growing coalition of anti-slavery political forces in the North. In the past, private venture had been combined with governmental support for annexation. As the 1850s progressed, North and South could no longer agree on what type of empire the government should promote; the resulting Civil War of 1861–65 can be seen as an imperial crisis.

Consolidation of the west and Pacific expansion (1865–98)

After the Civil War the relative positions of the main political parties towards imperial expansion switched. Southern Democrats, the same faction that had been ardently expansionist before the Civil War, tended to be suspicious of proposed new conquests in the Gilded Age. Some of this may have come from partisan rivalry, since Republicans held the presidency for most of the time in the decades following the Civil War. The Republican Party included most supporters of imperial expansion, such as Theodore Roosevelt. Many within the party, however, were highly suspicious of empire. Former anti-slavery advocates such as Carl Schurz felt that a republic that had shed

hundreds of thousands of lives in the name of demolishing slavery had no business to subjugate new peoples (Beisner 1968: 18–34).

Imperial consolidation and eyeing the Caribbean and Pacific

Latin America continued to be an area of interest for American policymakers after the Civil War. Americans continually worried that another empire would take over Mexico if they exerted control over their neighbours. During the Civil War these fears were realised when France set up a puppet regime under Emperor Maximilian. After the Union won the war, an army was sent to the Mexican border in order to both arm rebels fighting against Maximilian and threaten US intervention if France did not withdraw its troops, which it did. As usual, the US's interference in Latin American politics was motivated partially by a wish to prevent other empires from becoming further involved in the New World (Grandin 2007). In 1869, President Ulysses Grant submitted a treaty to the Senate for the annexation of the Dominican Republic, but this time annexation failed to find sufficient congressional support. The failure of the treaty showed that the anti-slavery forces of the antebellum era were divided about whether the US should expand now that the federal government was no longer in the hands of slaveholders.

Advocates of annexation also looked to Asia as a possible direction for the growth of the empire. American involvement in the Pacific predated military annexation: by the early 1800s, American traders and whalers roamed the Pacific, establishing economic ties with the places where they landed, and missionaries from New England saw Pacific islands as places to spread their culture. In 1854, Commodore Perry had used his naval force to pressure the insular Japanese government to open up markets to Westerners. Places such as the kingdom of Hawaii were accustomed to an active US presence (Cumings 2009: 88).

Americans had looked to Hawaii as a possible conquest since the 1850s, but sectional divisions and British interference had prevented the US from annexing the island chain. In 1893, a group of American citizens, many of them sugar planters, organised a coup against the Hawaiian monarchy. Within a month of the 1893 revolution (or coup), President Harrison submitted a treaty of annexation to the Senate. Harrison

put forward the treaty within the last few days of his administration, and for several months his successor, the Democrat Grover Cleveland, was unsure whether he would support it. Upon receiving reports about the heavy US involvement in the 1893 coup from fact-finders sent to the islands, Cleveland withdrew the treaty. His successor, William McKinley, pushed for the annexation of Hawaii, although it took him until the summer of 1898 to persuade enough senators and congressmen to agree to a resolution making the islands a US territory (Osborne 1981).

The US declared war on the Spain in the same year. The immediate cause was the supposed Spanish sinking of the USS *Maine*, which had exploded while in Havana harbour. Despite flimsy evidence that the cause of the explosion was Spanish action, newspapers throughout America demanded that President McKinley avenge the lost American lives. Other reasons had also attracted US attention to the island. For decades groups of Cubans had fought for independence from Spain; many Americans felt sympathy for these rebels. The US was also heavily invested in Cuban infrastructure and agriculture. Some of the investors worried that continued revolutionary bloodshed would put their business at risk, and saw US intervention as the fastest way to stabilise the region. Once war was declared, the US quickly won after seizing Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Many pro-war Americans downplayed the aid that their armies had received from Filipino and Cuban rebels. Within a short time, the US army found itself in a guerrilla war with Filipino rebels that would continue into the 20th century.

Debating the impetus of 1890s expansion

Expansion was a much-debated issue within 1890s American society, and there was no clear indication of who would back Hawaiian annexation or intervention within Cuba and who would not. Anti-imperialists came from a variety of backgrounds. Labour leaders such as Samuel Gompers thought that cheap colonial labour would demean the value of the American working man and undermine the nascent union movement (Appel 1954). On the other side of the economic spectrum, the steel magnate Andrew Carnegie joined the Anti-Imperialist League and advocated Filipino independence. Racism was one reason for anti-imperialism, as many feared the effects of mingling with the peoples of

Asia and the Caribbean. While nativism was always present in American society, in the Gilded Age federal legislation targeted people coming to America from the Pacific Rim, starting with the Page Act of 1875 and culminating with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (Lee 2003: 30). If such laws were meant to protect American society from alien influences, anti-imperialists asked, what would be the possible benefit in annexing a territory like Hawaii, with tens of thousands of Asian labourers? As in the arguments against expanding the slave empire in the 1850s, anti-expansionist ideologies in the 1890s blended racism and humanitarianism.

Historians remain divided on why it was that in the 1890s, despite the musings of leaders and newspaper editors for decades, the US expanded into the Pacific and Caribbean. One strand of scholarship, exemplified in the work of William Appleman Williams, Walter LaFeber, and Thomas L. McCormick, points to domestic economic anxiety as a cause. The second half of the 19th century was full of economic booms and busts, and many people at the time believed that busts happened whenever production of agricultural goods or manufactured goods outstripped domestic demand (LaFeber 1963: 78). Capitalists hoped to solve the imbalance of production of demand through expansion into foreign markets. The difficulty was finding a large untapped market. By the 1890s, American production already heavily penetrated Latin American markets, and any further expansion into Europe would come with fierce competition. Americans looked increasingly to Asia, and particular China, as a place for crops and manufactures to go. In order to exercise American influence into Asia, colonies would be useful as both trading ports and coaling stations for American ships. Key to reaching these Asian markets would be a canal across the isthmus of Central America (built with American capital), which would connect east coast ports to new areas of the globe. Controlling the canal would require securing the Caribbean, which meant taking Cuba and Puerto Rico. The goal would not be to annex permanently places like the Philippines permanently, but to establish an informal empire of economic and military control, exercised through friendly pro-US governments (McCormick 1967). The scholars who articulated this interpretation were part of the New Left and saw precedents for the Cold

War politics of the US in the choices made by Americans in the 1890s.

While the New Left's diplomatic history has had a large degree of influence, criticism of an economic explanation for 1890s imperialism has come from several directions. Some scholars, including Robert Zevin, have emphasised geo-strategic reasons for American expansion. Americans of the time such as Theodore Roosevelt or Henry Cabot Lodge saw the US as a young power capable of exerting just as much influence on the world stage as European empires. Such men were influenced by the work of Admiral Alfred Mahan, who argued that throughout history naval power had been what conferred power on the world stage; to compete against other empires, Mahan and his acolytes stated, the US should expand its navy and find outposts like Hawaii and the Philippines to serve as naval bases. Historians focusing on strategic reasons for imperial expansion argue that while Mahan and others occasionally made economic arguments, these were to shield their real motive of building up a strong military (this debate is covered well in Fry 1996).

Other historians such as Kristin Hoganson argue that cultural factors for imperialism must not be discounted in the face of economic or political ones. Hoganson (1998) points to rhetoric of the 1890s that lamented the closing of the western frontier and how this meant that American men no longer had a way to challenge their manliness. This crisis over masculinity translated into jingoistic language. Politicians who were against imperial expansion were open to accusations of effeminacy, which were deadly in a time where manhood was considered essential to having a political voice. Even the president was open to such a criticism; during the Cuban crisis McKinley's perceived hesitance to intervene in Cuba was attacked as indicative that the Civil War veteran had as much manly courage as an old woman. Anti-imperialists also made use of gendered language, arguing that wars in places such as the Philippines would sap the virtue of American males.

While scholarly debates over the particular contingencies of American imperialism continue, our understandings of what motivated imperialists and anti-expansionist have become more complex, and undermine any idea of necessity or Manifest Destiny. Each step of 19th-century imperialism was a

contest, eschewing any simple explanation of American empire.

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United States, Hawaiian Annexation

The US annexed the Hawaiian Islands by congressional resolution in the summer of 1898, the same summer in which it gained control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines by defeating Spain. Although debates about the merits of Hawaii had gained momentum in the 1890s, US involvement with the islands had begun over a century before. Throughout the 19th century, the Kingdom of Hawaii became tied politically, culturally, and economically to the US. This by no means meant that annexation was a smooth or inevitable process. Native Hawaiians negotiated and resisted each step, and studying the relationship between the US and the islands helps to show the contingency and complexity of the path towards annexation.

Contact and initial ties

Prior to contact with Europe, the Hawaiian Islands were divided among a series of competing kingdoms. Land within a given kingdom was in possession of the monarchy, with commoners earning the right to use it in exchange for labour and agricultural products. Historians disagree about the size of the pre-contact population, but one moderate estimate is that at least 300,000 Hawaiians lived on the islands. An English ship under the command of Captain James Cook discovered the islands in 1778, and soon they became a stopping point for Western ships. Diseases such as measles also travelled with the Westerners, and within a century of contact the native population of Hawaii had dropped below 40,000 (Basson 2005: 582).

The Kingdom of Hawaii was born out of this contact with European empires. In the decades following Captain Cook's voyage, a chieftain named Kamehameha unified the islands through a series of bloody campaigns and negotiations. Western technology such as muskets and cannon, along with advice from European consultants, was instrumental to his victories. Kamehameha I sought good relations with the various European powers whose ships came to Hawaii, especially Great Britain. On the basis of a treaty draft negotiated with a British naval officer in 1794, Kamehameha I actually thought that his monarchy was a protectorate of the British Empire, although the British Government denied that this was the case (Coffman 2009: 29). The US was one of the many empires that Kamehameha I encouraged to trade on the islands. Americans started visiting the islands soon after achieving independence from Great Britain in 1783, and Hawaii soon became a vital way station for American ships, particularly whalers.

Despite his willingness to adopt Western technology and ideas in order to unify the islands, Kamehameha I refused to convert to Christianity, arguing that he had no wish to overturn a set of cultural norms that had propped up his regime. Missionaries from the US arrived in 1820 and focused their efforts on reaching out to the royal family. They published the Bible in native Hawaiian and opened schools in order to better spread their message (Okihiro 2008: 187). These missionaries saw themselves as on a civilising mission, and many supported US