

The July 6, 1887 **Bayonet Constitution**, never ratified in the Hawaiian Kingdom's legislature, was accomplished with the use of intimidation and threats of violence against the king and his supporters and forced the king to sign it or be deposed. It was hatched out by an armed anti-monarchist militia consisting largely of white males primarily representing the interest of American capitalists centered around the sugar industry. Their initial and then long-range goals were actually to overthrow the kingdom and annex it to the USA. The Bayonet Constitution not only stripped the King of most of his personal authority but also gave almost complete control of the kingdom's government (legislature and cabinet) to white male Americans as they appointed themselves quickly as government officials.

The 1887 Bayonet Constitution essentially was a racist constitution, shifting power from Hawaiian citizens to financial interests controlled by the sugar industry which was clamoring for a Reciprocal Treaty with the US that favored it while giving control of Pearl Harbor to the US as demanded by the Americans but opposed by the king.

The Bayonet Constitution, to assure the sugar industry's complete control of the kingdom, made significant changes to voting requirements as it extended the voting rights to foreign alien residents not just naturalized citizens. But at the same time it specifically stripped the right to vote from Asians such as Japanese and Chinese who had previously enjoyed such rights as Hawaiian Kingdom citizens and who had been imported by the sugar industry as cheap laborers, working largely under almost slave-like conditions on their plantations. Only American, European and Hawaiian males were granted full voting rights if they met high economic (largely rich landowners) and literacy requirements. These requirements essentially also stripped the voting rights from all Native Hawaiians such as commoners as only wealthy Hawaiians such as Ali'i (chiefs) representing less than 1/3 of the Native Hawaii population were still eligible to vote.

The Bayonet Constitution, to further assure complete control of the House of Nobles (the Upper House of the legislature) by the white business class until perhaps the Hawaiian Kingdom could be overthrow at a later date, also removed the monarch's power to appoint members to it and made it an elected office. Being enlarged to 40 members with six-year terms, it assured that only wealthy landowners elected by their peers rather than appointed, would control the kingdom as high property and income requirements also disenfranchised the Native Hawaiian population to serve in the Legislature.

The largely disenfranchised Native Hawaiian population strongly opposed the Bayonet Constitution. When Queen Liliuokalani proposed a new constitution in January 1893 that would have reverted power back to Native Hawaiians she was overthrown by the same drafters of the Bayonet Constitution as they could reap great financial benefits through an annexation of Hawaii to the US.