

**Erasmus
University
Rotterdam**



Master Thesis

**Game of Empires: The Spanish-American War and the
Influence of American Imperialism**

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Abstract

Previously, the Spanish-American war has been used as a starting point for the development of American imperialism. However, after the rise of the United States as a great industrial power, due to domestic economic developments and worldwide industrialisation, the United States started looking outward. This thesis investigates the extent to which American imperialism is to be regarded as an incentive for the United States to engage in the Spanish-American war. It discusses the concept of American imperialism, the development of the United States during an era of global transformation, the special relationship between Cuba and the United States prior to the war, the influence of (yellow) journalism on the war, and the outcome of the war. Although it is generally agreed that the United States started their imperialistic policy only after the war, statistics on the commerce between the United States and Cuba compared to other countries indicate a special relationship between the two. An analysis on articles from contemporary newspapers and speeches and messages of President McKinley offer new insights on the connection between American imperialism and the Spanish-American war. This thesis concludes that the United States was eager to climb the international hierarchical ladder and did so by engaging in the Spanish-American war. Instead of the Spanish-American war being the beginning of American imperialism, American imperialism was the cause of the war. The United States acquired overseas territory by exercising control, both military and economically.

Keywords: Imperialism, Spanish-American War, expansionism, yellow journalism, control

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Preface

The basis for this thesis stems from my ever increasing interest in the United States of America and its foreign policy throughout the centuries. I could not have written this thesis without my supervisor, Maria del Pilar Jimenez Galindo, who I would like to thank for the feedback and comments on my thesis and the guidance throughout the process of writing. I would also like to express my gratitude to my fellow students whose criticism challenged me to write my best work. My strong support group at home has given me the support I needed in these challenging times. Lastly, I would like to thank the Erasmus University Rotterdam for the resources that were necessary and enabled this research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“War should never be entered upon until every agency of peace has failed.”

President William McKinley, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1897

In January 1898, the United States had sent an American warship to Cuba: battleship the *Maine*. At the time, Cuba belonged to the Spanish Empire. In February, the *Maine* suddenly blew up in the harbor of Havana, causing the deaths of 266 crewmembers. Although it was discovered that the explosion was due to an internal malfunction, the American media portrayed the accident as an attack of the Spanish on the United States. On April 25, 1898, the United States declared war on Spain. Following multiple provocative events from both sides, the Spanish-American War took place in Cuba and would last for three months.¹ After these three months, America’s commitment to controlling foreign markets increased. On December 10, 1898, the Treaty of Paris was signed and the United States acquired Puerto Rico, Guam and, for 20 million dollars, the Philippines from Spain. These new colonial possessions were a new opportunity but also a new responsibility; one the United States had not been familiar with before. Now, America could show the world that they were a great imperial power to be reckoned with.²

Before the Spanish-American War, transatlantic relations were already on a path of development. Europe and America shared many institutions and policies and each nation followed the economic progress of the other. Modern globalization across the North Atlantic was a product of political and economic conjuncture and the establishment of international economic integration and free markets in labor, goods and capital.³ Capitalism increased competitiveness across the transatlantic world. There was a tendency of firms to become bigger and more hierarchical. The transformation of new technology and management and the ability to control the labor process was most evident in the United States. Corporate firms dominated the United States industrial sector and new mechanisms for financing the industrialization emerged.⁴ From the 1870s onward, the United States companies started moving into Europe and American firms started penetrating European households with their manufactured goods.

The year 1898 has been widely considered a turning point for American imperialism. Due to the Spanish-American War, the United States acquired a stake in the game of empires: they acquired colonies. There is still much debate going on about the reasons of the United States to enter this war. Some historians argue that there were economic motives behind it, others state that the United States intervened out of humanitarian purposes. There are also scholars that state that there were expansionist

¹ Kenneth E. Hendrickson and Kenneth E. Jr. Hendrickson, *The Spanish-American War*, (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003).

² Colin D. Moore, *American Imperialism and the State 1893-1921*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 2.

³ Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17.

⁴ Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century*, 20.

incentives for the United States' involvement.⁵ No matter the intentions, the outcome of the war was territorial expansion of the United States. Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippine Islands became American. The United States had turned into an imperial power after the War of 1898.⁶

In the last century and a half, much literature has been published on the Spanish-American War and its relevance to American imperialism. 1898 is a year that is often mentioned as the starting point of the manifestation of the American empire.⁷ While American policymakers tend to deny the existence of American imperialism, they encounter resistance of many historians that strongly believe in the existence the phenomenon.⁸ This paper follows the argument of these historians: American imperialism is an existing phenomenon. However, the starting point of the empire building of the United States gives room for debate. Now more than ever, America's hegemonic position is disputed. Challenges such as an epidemic, the increase in power and influence of other great nations and domestic political instability cause the United States to develop and innovate each day, in order for it to remain its imperial status.⁹ It is therefore important to investigate the roots, and therefore the extent, of the American empire.

Previous literature offers explanations of how the war of 1898 with Spain resulted in the development of American imperialism. Historians have also researched how the First World war caused a worldwide climax of American influence and power.¹⁰ Research into the economic relationship between the United States and other countries before the Spanish-American war has also been done.¹¹ However, there is a gap between the relationship of the United States' foreign policy, and the Spanish-American War. Current literature lacks an analysis on the influence of American expansionism and imperialism on the decision to get involved in a war with Spain over Cuba. This research will fill this gap by indicating the relationship between America's involvement in the Spanish affairs in Cuba and the American imperialism strategy.

⁵ Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century*, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷ Authors such as Paul T. McCartney argue that before the war, the United States was a self-absorbed nation but after the war, it turned into a power which possessed overseas colonies and had noteworthy influence on its fellow nations. Paul T. McCartney, *Power and Progress: American National Identity, the War of 1898, and the Rise of American Imperialism*, (LSU Press, 2006), 2.

⁸ Tyron Groh and James Lockhart, "Is America An Empire?" War on the Rocks, last modified on August 27, 2015, <https://warontherocks.com/2015/08/is-america-an-empire/>

⁹ Alex Lo, "Forget the rise of China, it's the fall of America you should worry about," South China Morning Post, last modified January 7, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/comment/opinion/article/3116850/forget-rise-china-its-fall-america-you-should-worry-about>; Wade Davis, "The Unraveling of America," RollingStone, last modified August 7, 2020, <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/political-commentary/covid-19-end-of-american-era-wade-davis-1038206/>; Nick Bryant, "The year 2020: A time when everything changed," BBC, last modified December 18, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-55353178>.

¹⁰ Roberv Zevin, "An Interpretation of American Imperialism", *The Journal of Economic History* (March 1972), 332.

¹¹ Robert E. Lipsey, "U.S. Foreign Trade and the Balance of Payments, 1800-1913", *National Bureau of Economic Research* (April 1994).

1.1. Literature review

The following section will analyze the historical discourse on the reasons of the United States to engage in the war with Spain. The debate on American imperialism has developed over the years. Therefore, this thesis will analyze different perspectives on the causes of war by chronology to establish an analysis of the current gap within the literature about this subject instead of an analysis on different topics. The theoretical framework will offer an analysis of the historical discourse on different topics related to the Spanish-American war and American imperialism.

One of the first relevant works is that of Julius W. Pratt. In 1934, he already distinguished the contemporary debate on the reasons of the United States to engage in a war with Spain over Cuba.¹² He argues that it was not convenient for American business to engage in a war with Spain and that the outcome of the war and its aftermath came as a complete surprise for the United States. He argues, by using quotations of spokesmen of the American business after the war, that only after the war, the United States attitude against international relations and foreign markets changed. According to Pratt, the United States' interest in such affairs was established not before, but after 1898.

Pratt built his argument on scholars such as James Ford Rhodes (1922). Rhodes states that there were little to no financial or business interests in the war; the business and financial sector even opposed the war. Following this argument, he states that the war was a result of humanitarian sympathy for Cuba and the press who engineered popular excitement. According to Rhodes, annexations that followed the United States' victory were responsibilities that were not accounted for and came as a surprise.¹³ Rhodes' argument is very important as it sets out the different opinions in the United States on engaging in a war with Spain. It is useful to analyze this argument in order to investigate why the United States wanted to engage in a war when the business and financial sector opposed it and why the United States favored humanitarian sympathy for Cuba over negative economic outcomes. American imperialism can be weighed into this analysis. Rhodes' refusal to include American imperialism in his research is therefore rather interesting.

On the other hand, Professor H.U. Faulkner (1924) argued that the great cause of the war was the expansion of American industrial and financial power.¹⁴ According to Faulkner, Americans invested, before 1898, 50 million dollars in Cuba. The commerce between the two countries accounted for 100 million dollars annually. Faulkner therefore argues that the war with Spain was hastened because of economic reasons. He also adds that, because of its strategic location, Cuba had been of interest of the United States long before the war erupted. Faulkner emphasizes the importance of the American press on the decision of the United States to engage in the war with Spain as well. They motivated American

¹² Julius W. Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish-American War," *The Hispanic Historical Review* Vol. 14, No. 2 (Duke University Press, 1934): 163.

¹³ Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish-American War," 163.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

citizens to support American intervention as a sign of manifesting the United States' destiny.¹⁵ This thesis tends to follow Faulkner's line of reasoning rather than that of Pratt. Faulkner published his analysis only two decades after the war. Since then, much other literature on the subject has been published and new archival sources have become available.

After the 1930s, it was rather quiet on the subject. However, one important work on this subject, published in 1964, should not be neglected. Thomas Bailey's *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, sets out the gradient of the Spanish-American War and the years before. Bailey writes little on American imperialism as an incentive for its engagement in the war. He argues that a combination of different actors 'made' the United States go to war. Firstly, the Americans were caught in the middle because of the Cuban policy to devastate the island so badly that Spain would not want to have it anymore. As Americans were highly economically invested in the Island, they were affected as well. Secondly, yellow journalism exaggerated the stories on the horrors of the Spanish against Cuba, causing much American sentiment for the Cubans. Also, the mysterious destruction of an American battleship, *the Maine*, resulted in anger towards Spain. Lastly, even though there were diplomatic successes between the United States and Spain, public opinion advocating for American intervention in the war caused President McKinley to capitulate and on 21 April 1898, the United States declared war on Spain.¹⁶ This book is very significant for my research as it sets out all of the possible incentives of American involvement in the war, except for American imperialism. This is interesting as many other works at least mention imperialism, either advocating for or against it being the cause of the war with Spain. This work also mentions a lot of important different primary sources. Bailey uses newspapers, letters between United States government officials and Congressional Records in his argument.

In the 1970s, the debate on the existence of American imperialism and its influence in the Spanish-American war, flamed up again. Philip S. Foner (1972) begins by opposing the existing consensus that the United States had no imperialistic motives for engaging in the war with Spain. He states that the United States was already entering the path of imperialism in the early 1890s.¹⁷ Foner has published two volumes on the Spanish-American War in which he argues that Cuba established a successful rebellion but it was subjected to neocolonial imperialism of the United States. He emphasizes the importance of the Platt Amendment which is an Amendment in the Cuban constitution enabling the United States to interfere in domestic situations in Cuba and to contain an American base in Cuba. Foner considers as the starting point of American neocolonialism.¹⁸ Although Foner mainly focuses on events in Cuba and the relationship between Cuban revolutionaries and the United States, his work attributes some arguments in favor of the idea that American imperialism was already on its way before the outbreak of

¹⁵ H.U. Faulkner, *American Economic History*, (London: Harper And Brothers London, 1924), 562-568.

¹⁶ Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), 451-464.

¹⁷ Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the birth of American Imperialism* Vol. 1, (NYU Press, 1972), xxx.

¹⁸ Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War*, 576-577.

the Spanish-American War. His work helps analyzing the international relations between Cuba, Spain and the United States before, during and after the war. As he emphasizes the importance of Cuban force against Spain, and therefore diminishes the importance of the American military force, his arguments are useful to indicate that the United States wanted to engage in the war rather than that it was needed. This is an interesting new angle as other historians such as Thomas A. Bailey tend to ignore this factor.¹⁹

Graham A. Cosmas (1998) describes what the United States army looked like before, during and after the Spanish-American War.²⁰ He argues, by quoting The New York Times, that in the years before the Spanish-American War, the American army was weak and would not be able to offer any considerable resistance to an attack from a strong naval power. The US Army had a strength of 25.000 officers and 25 infantry, 5 artillery and 10 cavalry in 1897.²¹ The War Department in 1898 was, like the army and militia, a collection of agencies which were rather disconnected and unable to form a unified institution.²² The Army lacked any uniformed chief as there was a continuous conflict going on between the Commanding General and the Secretary of War. The conflict was mostly about who had authority over whom.²³ Like many other historians, Cosmas stays away from assigning American imperialism as one of the reasons of the United States to engage in the war with Spain. He states that during the last two decades of the nineteenth century “American businessmen sought enlarged foreign markets; churchmen and philanthropists considered it their duty to liberate and uplift allegedly benighted foreign peoples; and a vocal clique of intellectuals and politicians believed that national greatness required an assertive foreign policy”.²⁴ However, he emphasizes that it were these elements, trade and political influence, and not territory that drove the United States to challenge European imperialism in Latin America and the Far East. But, he also argues that the United States worked towards the establishment of different outposts on island in the Pacific, towards control over the Central American Canal and towards an American hegemony in Hawaii. Because of these aspirations, the United States encountered some confrontations with the Old Power which caused the need of the United States War Department to be better than ever.²⁵ The work of Cosmas is rather significant in the research on American imperialism and its existence before the Spanish-American war as it researches the American way of war from a different perspective. Cosmas uses much data from the Spanish-American War army to indicate its strengths and weaknesses and he reconstructs the story of the war from the perspective of the American army. He sets out different challenges of the American overseas empire by supplementing war memoirs, reports, telegrams, official and personal letters and published government documents. This work therefore not only helps

¹⁹ Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964).

²⁰ Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish-American War*, (Texas A&M University Press, 1998).

²¹ Cosmas, *An Army for Empire*, 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁵ Cosmas, *An Army for Empire*, 29.

contextualizing primary sources, it also offers new primary sources. Even though, the biggest part of the book is about the Spanish-American War itself and its aftermath, there are some chapters on the situation of the American army before the war had begun. It is also interesting to investigate to what extent the American army was prepared for American imperialism before the War and therefore, to what extent the United States was working on creating an empire before the Spanish-American War.

In his revised publication, Walter LaFeber (1998) sets out the idea of American expansionism in the four decades before the Spanish-American War.²⁶ He provides examples of different (failed) policies of the United States government to acquire new territories and foreign markets. He emphasizes the importance of Cuba for the United States. As early as 1808, America had expressed interest in annexing the island. The expansionist projects failed in the 1850s because the advocates of these projects were southern slaveholders, according to LaFeber.²⁷ During the years before the Spanish-American War, the United States was busy with exploring new markets in the Far East and to open new areas of China.²⁸ LaFeber concludes that President McKinley chose to engage in a war with Spain due to a combination of motives. He wanted to stop the revolution in Cuba, to protect American property there, and finally, to extend United States' power in the Pacific so America could maintain their Open Door policy in China. This book is useful for my research as it extensively indicates the United States foreign policy before and during the Spanish-American War. As much literature on this topic focuses on the war itself and its aftermath, this work is crucial for my research. LaFeber identifies American expansionism but won't go as far as considering American Imperialism as an actual cause of the war. His argumentation and primary sources are useful to analyze to what extent the events he discussed can be considered part of American imperialism. However, it is therefore very important for my research to emphasize the difference between American expansionism and American imperialism.

An important advocate of American imperialism is Thomas Bender. In his book *A Nation Among Nations* (2006), he emphasizes the idea that America has always been busy with building an empire. He rejects any argument stating that the war of 1898 was accidental or unthinking. He does so by discussing the 'American personality'. He states that Americans have the compulsion to use new lands and opportunities to achieve wealth and (white) Americans were always seeking to expand spatial and temporal future.²⁹ He uses quotations of different notable Americans such as Henry J. Raymond who was the founder of the New York Times. He also argues that US expansion was always enforced by military means and accompanied by national policy. It was not a private enterprise. He also states that the United States used diplomacy and force to protect the access of the United States to global markets. He finalizes by stating that the United States had already a lot of experience in taking territory and imperialism before

²⁶ Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, (Cornell University Press, 1998).

²⁷ LaFeber, *The New Empire*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 352.

²⁹ Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 187.

they entered the twentieth century.³⁰ This work is very useful as it advocates strongly in favor of the idea of American imperialism and its existence before the Spanish-American War. As the book uses different types of primary sources, and because it is published more recently than much of the other literature on the topic, this work is rather significant within this topic. Another work of Bender, published in 2002, is relevant regarding American imperialism.

In 2012, Hugh Rockoff's work on America and its economic way of war was published.³¹ He argues that the Spanish-American War increased America's commitment to control territories beyond its borders substantially.³² A very useful part of his work this research is his emphasis on special interests of different actors in the United States. He sets out a few groups: newspapers and its yellow journalism, owners of property in Cuba (and their workers) and the military itself. He dives deeper into latter. He states that "The war, in other words, meant more bases to command and more ships to captain, not just during the short period of the war itself when promotions could be won, but for years to come".³³ This work is significant as it sets out a different perspective on the Spanish American War, namely the economic perspective. The book was published rather recent, in 2012, and emphasizes different groups of interest in the Spanish-American War. By using this book, this thesis can indicate different incentives of the war than what has been discussed in earlier works. By using the case study of the sinking of the American battleship *the Maine* on the eve of the Spanish-American War, Rockoff's work helps analyzing the diplomatic relations between Spain and the United States before the outbreak of the war and to what extent the United States was forced to engage in the war. By arguing against any considerable threat against the United States by Spain or any economic incentive, and by indicating special interests in the war besides economic interests, Rockoff continues where Pratt (1934) stopped.

Colin D. Moore argues in her book, *American Imperialism and the State, 1892-1921* (2017) how the development of the American state was affected by the acquisition of overseas colonies. Moore believes that American imperialism finds its roots in the Spanish-American War. Because of this war, the United States gained 'all of a sudden' new territories and it had therefore, new responsibilities. Other than LaFeber and Foner, Moore argues, by using speeches of President William McKinley after the war, that "the war was no more invited by us than were the questions which are laid at our door by its result".³⁴ Moore also states that "Although American empire is often dismissed as a weak imitation of the more potent European form – or, more troubling, its existence simply denied – it was far more capable and its goals were far more ambitious than is often recognized".³⁵ Moore emphasizes that American imperialism was an experiment within the development of the American state. She agrees with Bailey (1964) on the

³⁰ David Immerwahr, *How To Hide An Empire*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 191.

³¹ Hugh Rockoff, *America's Economic Way of War: War and the US Economy from The Spanish-American War to the Persian Gulf War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³² Rockoff, *America's Economic Way of War*, 50.

³³ Rockoff, *America's Economic Way of War*, 55.

³⁴ Colin D. Moore, *American Imperialism and the State 1893-1921*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1.

³⁵ Moore, *American Imperialism*, 1.

debate within Congress about the annexation of Hawaii and its importance for the colonization of the Philippines.³⁶

This thesis will analyze the influence of American imperialism on the decision to engage in the Spanish-American war. Doing so, this thesis will argue that American imperialism existed and was a significant aspect of foreign politics of the United States at the end of the 1890s. Scholars such as Pratt and Rockoff already emphasized the importance of the United States economy during this period, and the disastrous economic consequences a war with Spain could potentially bring. They both refrain from indicating a direct link with American imperialism as they set out multiple reasons for the United States to engage in the war. Although some scholars mention American imperialism in their analysis of the Spanish-American war, they refuse to link American imperialism directly to the outbreak of the Spanish-American war. Following the arguments of Faulkner (1924) and Foner (1972), and arguing against the consensus that the United States had no imperialistic incentives regarding the Spanish-American war, this thesis both agrees on the idea of the importance of American imperialism during the late 1890s as well as offering a new perspective on the war: the Spanish-American war did not cause American imperialism, American imperialism caused the Spanish-American war.

1.2. Research question

This thesis asks the question: To what extent did American imperialism influence the United States' decision to engage in the Spanish-American War? This thesis thereby argues that the idea of American imperialism was already present before the eruption of the war and is to be considered an incentive of the decision to go to war. This thesis will dive deeper into why the war with Spain was important to acquire this empire and how American imperialism was evident in the decision-making of entering the Spanish-American war. Chapter 2 *American Imperialism, a Myth?* will analyze the concept of American imperialism in regard to the contemporary global transformations and will set out the aspirations of the United States of becoming a worldwide empire. Chapter 3 will firstly discuss the relationship between Cuba and the United States prior to the eruption of the Spanish-American war. It will dive deeper into the extent in which the relationship between the United States and Cuba was special compared to the relationship of the United States and other (is)lands during that period. This relationship will be identified using two indicators: the economic relation and the political developments on the island and in the United States. Lastly, it will analyze the relationship between Spain and Cuba as Spain was the sovereign of the island prior to the Spanish-American war. Chapter 4, *The Eruption of the War* will discuss how the Cuban insurrection prior to the Spanish-American war was perceived in the United States and it will discuss the war sentiments in the United States during the Spanish-American war. Chapter 5, *The Outcome of the*

³⁶ Ibid., 62.

War, will then analyze the outcome of the war and conclude to what extent the concept of American imperialism was exercised after the war.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

Chapter 2 will fully elaborate on the definition of American imperialism and the concept's controversy. However, this thesis will also use other concepts that need an explanation. These concepts are expansionism, colonialism and yellow journalism.

Expansionism

Expansionism is often used as a synonym of imperialism. However, it is worth discussing the definition of expansionism on its own as it contributes to the debate on American imperialism. Current literature lacks a consensus on the precise difference between the two concepts.

Walter LaFeber (1998) was careful in his vocabulary about imperialism, empire, colonialism and expansionism. He intendedly used the concepts of 'empire' and 'colonialism' in reference to formal political control while using 'expansion' to indicate informal economic influence.³⁷ The Cambridge Dictionary offers the following definition of expansionism: "increasing the amount of land ruled by a country, or the business performed by a company".³⁸ Also, it offers another definition for imperialism: "a system in which a country rules other countries, sometimes having used force to get power over them".³⁹ Thus, there is a difference in the meaning of 'expansionism' and 'imperialism'. It is therefore interesting that scholars are hesitant from using the word 'imperialism' in regard to America, but they do mention 'expansionism'.

Bernard Fensterwald Jr. (1985) dares to involve himself within this debate. In his book, *The anatomy of American "isolationism and expansionism, part I*, he describes expansionism as being the opposite of isolationism.⁴⁰ This rationalization of concepts is often referred to as "manifest destiny". By calling themselves expansionists instead of imperialists, Americans believed themselves to be politically superior regarding the imperialist nations of Europe. Many Americans convinced themselves by being expansionist, rather than imperialist, their territorial conquests were unlike European imperialism.⁴¹ This thesis refers to expansionism as the idea of extending a sovereigns' territory in order to increase its benefits. These benefits range from political to economic and cultural. Chapter 3 analyzes the importance of expansionism to the United States in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

³⁷ Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, (Cornell University Press, 1998).

³⁸ "Expansionism," in *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/expansionism>.

³⁹ "Imperialism," in *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus* (Cambridge University Press, n.d.), <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/imperialism>.

⁴⁰ Bernard Fensterwald, Jr., "The anatomy of American "isolationism" and expansionism, Part I", *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 1958).

⁴¹ Fensterwald, Jr., "The anatomy", 117.

Colonialism

Another concept that needs some elaboration is colonialism. There are different two types of colonialism to be distinguished: settler and administrative colonialism. This distinction follows a historical shift in the concept of colonialism itself. Settler colonialism refers to the permanent settlement by emigrants. Administrative colonialism refers to the establishment of colonial empires. Administrative colonialism is defined as “the establishment and maintenance for an extended time, of rule over alien people that is separate from and subordinate to the ruling power”.⁴² Administrative colonialism entails the establishment of sovereignty and political power to a territory and the transportation of populations. It refers to the idea of administering alien peoples and new territories.⁴³ Ania Loomba (2015) defined this colonialism as “the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods”.⁴⁴ In *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspective* the authors argue that American imperialism was to be characterized as colonialism in regard to the Philippine conquest.⁴⁵ Julian Go refers to colonialism as being “a distinct form of imperialism that involves the explicit and often legally codified establishment of direct political domination over a foreign territory and peoples”.⁴⁶ When referring to ‘colonies’ and ‘colonialism’, this thesis uses the definition of administrative colonialism. Chapter 2 analyzes the importance of establishing control over foreign territories further. Supported by William Willoughby, who is the treasurer of Puerto Rico, a John Hopkins economist and a preeminent scholar of American colonial policy, Go argues that the acquisition of the Philippines turned the United States into a colonial power.⁴⁷ This thesis will elaborate further on the idea of administrative colonialism as an incentive of the war.

Yellow Journalism

The last controversial concept used in this thesis is “yellow journalism”. As David R. Spencer states in his book *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America’s Emergence as a World Power*, yellow journalism is based on “the belief that press can be an agent of change in which interest groups, political parties, and religious organizations can vent their beliefs in the press in the hope that other persons who share those concepts can create what we have previously noted as communities”.⁴⁸ The term emerged in the United States in order to characterize the news that was brought by Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst in their competition for having the most readers in New York City in the late 1890s.

⁴² Emerson, R., "Colonialism," in International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (New York: Macmillan, 1968).

⁴³ Go, *The American Colonial State*, 5.

⁴⁴ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, (Routledge, 2015), 20.

⁴⁵ Julian Go, Anne L. Foster, Emily S. Rosenberg, Gilbert M. Joseph, *The American Colonial State in the Philippines: Global Perspective*, (Duke University Press, 2003).

⁴⁶ Julian Go, et al., *The American Colonial State in the Philippines*, 5.

⁴⁷ Go, *The American Colonial State*, 5.

⁴⁸ David R. Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America’s Emergence as a World Power* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 7.

This rivalry caused the news to evolve from being only available for a certain class into a mass medium. These mass media included proportions of populism, socialism and sensationalism to attract the interests of the new working-class and immigrants. The old-fashioned newspapers for the upper-class fought back and emphasized the importance of taste and politics, calling the mass newspapers yellow journalism.⁴⁹ Many scholars argue that yellow journalism had a massive influence on America's foreign policy before and during the Spanish-American war. Some even argue that because of the persistent encouragement of United States' press, in which the pro-war sentiment of American citizens was emphasized, the United States' government decided to engage in the war with Spain. In 1932, the historian Marcus M. Wilkerson published the book *Public Opinion and the Spanish-American War*. According to Wilkerson, historians discussing the Spanish-American war wrongfully ignored the importance of yellow journalism. He argues that "the American press played a large part in leading the United States into a war with Spain" because the press influenced public opinion into pro-involvement sentiments.⁵⁰ Later, other authors built on Wilkerson's publications on the importance of yellow journalism in regard to the Spanish-American War.⁵¹

Charles H. Brown's book *The Correspondents' War: Journalists in the Spanish-American War* was published in 1967.⁵² Although he agrees on the importance of yellow journalism in the involvement of the United States in a war with Spain, this publication offers a different perspective on a similar argument. Brown emphasizes the lives of the yellow journalists instead of the overall mass newspapers. He accentuates the "spirit of times" and its significance as a cause of the war. According to Brown, the war would have erupted even without the presence of yellow press as public opinion, and congress were already in favor of the war.⁵³ David R. Spencer argues in his book *The Yellow Journalism: The Press and America's Emergence as a World power* (2007) that, although there is evidence in the idea that New York press did not stick to the truth when reporting on the Spanish-American war and the possible involvement of America, the idea that these journalistic enterprises were able to drag the United States into a war with Spain is false and misleading.⁵⁴

Following the arguments of Wilkerson and Wisan, since the emergence of mass media and yellow journalism, newspapers were able to shape public opinion. Yellow journalism was able to shape a certain environment in which being in favor of a war with Spain had become popular opinion. This thesis argues

⁴⁹ Richard L. Kaplan, "Yellow Journalism," in *The International Encyclopedia of Communication* (Malden: Blackwell Pub, 2008), 5569.

⁵⁰ Marcus M. Wilkerson, *Public Opinion and the Spanish-American War* (New York: Russel & Russell, 1932), 2.

⁵¹ Joseph E. Wisan, *The Cuban Crisis as Reflected in the New York Press (1895-1898)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934); W. A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961).

⁵² Charles H. Brown, *The Correspondents' War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967).

⁵³ Brown, *The Correspondents' War*, 443.

⁵⁴ Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism*, 124.

that American imperialism was the reason the United States went to war with Spain and it is therefore important to analyze in which way American imperialism was evident in yellow journalism.

1.4 Sources and Methods

This thesis will use various literature to indicate the extent to which United States foreign policy in regard to the Spanish-American war is to be characterized as imperialism. This literature is used to establish a definition of the phenomenon American imperialism and primary sources are then used to ‘test’ the extent to which this phenomenon was evident in the United States’ approach toward the Spanish-American war.

In its analysis, this thesis will use different kinds of primary sources. It will focus on written sources, both quantitative and qualitative. American imperialism is a concept that refers to the influence of the United States on foreign states. Regarding economic influence, qualitative sources are necessary to establish an overview of the economic relations between the United States and other foreign markets. As this research focuses on the war in Cuba, it will analyze the data offered of the trade and foreign investments between the United States and Cuba before and after the war. Quantitative sources will indicate domestic developments in the United States and Cuba. There are three types of quantitative sources that are mainly used in this thesis. These are newspapers (either yellow press or normal press), a symposium and speeches of President McKinley (either in public or messages to congress).

Firstly, it is important to address the qualitative sources. An example of statistics being used in this thesis is data about the commerce between the United States and Cuba from 1891 until 1897 in American dollars, coming from the *American Colonial Handbook* by Thomas Campbell-Copeland.⁵⁵ The book offers a detailed description of Cuba, its history, geography, culture and politics and also includes several statistics regarding Cuba’s economic position. The data offers an insight in the economic relationship between the United States and Cuba before the war. To some extent, the table indicates some sort of interdependence between the two countries. The source also offers a second table which indicates the trade between Cuba and Spain. Using this second table, this research is able to compare the trade between the United States and Cuba, and Spain and Cuba. The source is therefore rather useful as it gives an overview of the trade between the countries in the exact years this research needs to investigate. However, the source also implies a challenge. As it indicates only the trade between Cuba and Spain and Cuba and the United States separately, other sources are necessary to be able to compare these volumes and give meaning to the data. This is the case for some other qualitative sources used in this thesis as well. Therefore, this thesis has provided some own calculations to be able to compare and give meaning to the data that is offered.⁵⁶ Also, the qualitative sources are rather objective as they only offer numbers

⁵⁵ Thomas Campbell-Copeland, *A Ready Reference Book of Facts & Figures, Historical, Geographical, & Commercial, about Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Hawaii, & Guam* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1899).

⁵⁶ Sometimes it was necessary to offer percentages instead of exact numbers to be able to give meaning to the numbers. This is indicated by “Own calculations” in the source.

(and no explanations). To analyze the economic ‘relationship’ between the countries, this thesis therefore offers explanations for deviations in the data, when necessary for the analysis, backed by secondary sources.

The first kind of quantitative primary sources that are used in this thesis come from contemporary newspapers and magazines. Articles such as “Why we need Cuba” from General Thomas Jordan in the *Forum Magazine* of July 1891 offer interesting insights in the train of thought in the United States in regard to American imperialism before the eruption of the war.⁵⁷ In this article, General Thomas Jordan states that Cuba would be very valuable in the hands of the United States. The author emphasizes the importance of Cuba for the United States and even argues that the United States should occupy this territory. The article was published seven years before the war, therefore giving an indication of the ideas on expansionism and imperialism prior to the war. This thesis uses more similar newspaper articles to approach the public opinion on the Cuban insurrection and the Spanish-American war. However, it is important to be aware of the idea that the press in the United States was rather advocative of entering a war with Spain over Cuba. Some historians even argue that it was due to the ongoing pressure of the American press, that President McKinley considered and eventually engaged in the war with Spain.⁵⁸

The newspapers and their articles are not only useful sources to establish an overview of public opinion on American imperialism prior to the Spanish-American war, they also offer insights in the extent to which the United States was occupied with expanding to other regions after the war. Such an article is to be found in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*. On June 10, 1898, a letter of Lorrin A. Thurston was published in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*. The American lawyer and publisher of this newspaper wrote on Hawaiian neutrality during the Spanish-American War.⁵⁹ Such an article is relevant to my research as it shows the view of Americans on the idea of Hawaiian ‘independence’ and their obligation to choose ‘the American side.’ It emphasizes therefore the idea of territorialism and expansionism in regards to Hawaii. It is important to keep in mind that articles in newspapers do not reflect the opinion of the entire United States, neither is it a representation of different groups of people. However, it does show the way public opinion was shaped in the United States due to stories and articles. In an era in which communication was not developed to the extent we know it nowadays and in which newspapers were the main suppliers of the news, these sources are significant indicators of certain trends within the United States or Cuba. Thereby, the notion of yellow journalism is very important in analyzing articles and stories in newspapers of the late nineteenth century. As explained before, yellow press tried to sell as much newspapers as possible thereby not being too pressed with the “trueness” of these stories. But, it is

⁵⁷ General Thomas Jordan, “Why we need Cuba,” *The Forum* Vol. 11 March-August (1895), 560-567.

⁵⁸ John Maxwell Hamilton, Renita Coleman, Bettye Grable and Jacy Cole, “An Enabling Environment: A reconsideration of the press and the Spanish-American War”, *Journalism Studies* Vol. 7 (2006): 78-93.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700500450368>

⁵⁹ Lorrin A. Thurston, “On Neutrality: Should This Government Make Declaration – Effect on Annexation,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* June 10, 1898. <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047084/1898-06-10/ed-1/seq-2/>

even more interesting to analyze these stories as well to indicate the way and the extent in which the American public was being informed about the Cuban insurrection and the Spanish-American war.

Another sort of a quantitative source that is being used in indicating the importance of American expansionism and imperialism before the Spanish-American War is a symposium by the American Magazine of Civics published in 1895.⁶⁰ In this symposium, leaders of different states, such as the Governor of Colorado, the Governor of Alabama, and U.S. representatives, agree to the idea that Cuba will sooner or later become a part of the dominion of the United States. They argue that at the time is ripe for ‘the necessary preliminary action’. These articles argue in favor of the annexation of Cuba for expansionist reasons. The symposium is given 3 years prior to the war and each speaker is asked two questions: whether he believed in the annexation of Cuba and how the annexation should be carried out. As these are the leading men of cities and states, this is a very interesting source. It indicates that the United States did not ‘on accident’ engage in the war with Spain, but were already working on ways to annex Cuba – or at least thinking about it. However, it must be noted that such a symposium is only the opinion of these men and does not reflect the opinion of a whole country, or of a President. When investigated in the correct context, such a source is very valuable for this research.

Lastly, the speeches of President McKinley on the subject of Cuba and expansionism are important quantitative primary sources in this thesis. McKinley’s speeches give a good insight in how the President framed the Cuban insurrection and the incentives of the United States to go to war. This thesis uses a variety of speeches and messages of President McKinley, ranging from messages to Congress to speeches at expositions. An example of such a speech is at the Omaha’s Trans-Mississippi Exposition in 1898.⁶¹ In this speech, McKinley speaks of the importance of winning the war and the consequences of this victory. He states that they did not want to engage in the war, but they won and now they have to deal with the consequences. These consequences entail the international responsibilities that come with having ‘new territories’. This speech can be used to indicate how American people were informed on the new acquired territories and whether the United States regarded themselves as an imperialistic power. He also indicates the importance of the war for the reconciliation between the North and the South after the Civil War. Such speeches are important sources as they show the way President McKinley portrayed the Spanish-American war and how he framed this to the outside world. It also indicates his foreign policies and they are official statements of his administrations regarding the decisions being made about the Cuban situation. Lacking an autobiography, these speeches and messages are closest to indicating McKinley’s approach and opinion about these matters.

⁶⁰ F.R. Coudert, Gov. Evans, Gov. Oates, Gideon J. Tucker, Martin McMahan, Henry Clews, Wm. Sulzer, John DeWitt Warner, Ethan Ellan, Major Byrne, Thomas Burke Grant, “Ought we to Annex Cuba? A Symposium,” *The American Magazine of Civics* (1895), 51.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=umn.31951002149143z&view=1up&seq=52&q1=cuba>

⁶¹ President McKinley, “Address at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition at Omaha,” Speech Omaha, Nebraska, (October 12, 1898), 100-106.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002005057410&view=1up&seq=126&q1=omaha>

Chapter 2: American Imperialism, A Myth?

American imperialism is a much-debated subject. Not only between historians, but also among the United States public and American politicians. All have strong opinions on whether an American empire has existed or still exists. President Bush declared on two separate occasions, once in June 2003 in a speech to graduating cadets at West Point and once during a Veterans assembly at the White House in November 2003, how “America has no empire to extend or utopia to establish” and that “America has no territorial ambitions. We don’t seek an empire. Our nation is committed to the freedom for ourselves and for others.”⁶² This chapter answers the question: what is American imperialism? It thereby discusses the definition of empire and imperialism, but also the changing international relations in the decades before the eruption of the Spanish-American war and whether the United States had any desires to join the game of empires. Although being mentioned, the anti-imperialist movement will not in depth be dealt with as the concept is broad and in need of a separate investigation in regard to its relation with the Spanish-American War.

2.1. Definition empire and imperialism

In order to discuss the concept of American imperialism, it is important to define it. However, it is rather difficult to secure a definition of something other people deny the existence of. Then let’s start with a definition of empire and imperialism. In 1986 the historian William Doyle came up with a clear definition of both. “Empire, then, is a relationship formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.” Doyle also explains the opportunities and motives that give rise to imperialism. Some states have a centralized government, a shared political loyalty and differentiated economies. These states use these features to dominate other political societies. They define themselves as imperial metropolises and the dominated societies as the “imperializable peripheries”. These peripheries often have no or divided governments, little or divided political loyalties and undifferentiated economies. The institutions and forces that cause and shape imperialism are not singular. Rather, they are military and economic, social, cultural and political. By using Doyle’s definition, it is possible to distinguish empires from other world politics by the concept of control. Doyle argues that in order to indicate the existence of an empire and imperialism, one must demonstrate three features of control: the existence of this control, why one nation expands and establishes this control and why the other party fails to resist this control.⁶³

⁶² Michael Ignatieff, “The American Empire; The Burden,” *The New York Times Magazine*, January 5, 2003, [https://www-nytimes-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/2003/01/05/magazine/the-american-empire-the-burden.html](https://www.nytimes-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/2003/01/05/magazine/the-american-empire-the-burden.html).

⁶³ Michael W. Doyle, *Empires*, Cornell Studies in Comparative History (London: Cornell University Press, 1986), 45.

This thesis will focus on military and economic control in regard to the Cuba situation and the United States.

American imperialism is one of the most debated subjects within American historical discourse. On the one hand, there are people that do not believe in the existence of an American 'empire'. A famous anti-imperialist is George W. Bush, he claimed that the United States was the only great power that has ever refused having an empire.⁶⁴ But there are also people who believe that America is, and has been, an empire since the Spanish-American War of 1898. They argue that by annexing the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam, the United States turned into a colonial power. After the war, the United States pursued a foreign policy based on imperialism and the Monroe Doctrine.⁶⁵

American imperialism is a concept that refers to the military, cultural and economic influence of the United States on other nations. It is often referred to in an economic sense. A popular American narrative is that due to industrialization in the latter half of the nineteenth century, American business expanded overseas. American imperialism coincided with American exceptionalism and the idea that by expanding their 'ideology' and by bringing democracy, industry and Christianity to underdeveloped societies, the world would be better off. American imperialism coincided with American exceptionalism. This combination of imperialism and exceptionalism underlines the difference of the United States from other countries because of their mission to spread democracy and liberty across the globe.⁶⁶

Currently, there is a consensus between historians about whether the United States is and has been an empire. Samuel Flagg Bemis (1962), a historian specialized in American foreign relations, believes that America accepted their imperialist status during the Spanish-American War. However, they only implemented their imperialism when international affairs forced them to: to stop aggression from for instance, Spain in 1898, the Nazis during World War II and the Soviets during the Cold War. Bemis frames American imperialism as a nation that "used its power and influence for good".⁶⁷

Since the 1960s, the meaning of imperialism and empire has been greatly expanded. Several historians, such as Paul Kramer, move beyond any argument about definitions, thereby broadening the concept of imperialism. They believe that the use of the word empire refers to an emphasis on unequal power relations. According to these historians, the "empire is not a single thing but rather a complex and ever-changing set of unequal relationships." Using this definition, these historians attribute series of

⁶⁴ Alex Byrne, "Yes the US had an empire – and in the Virgin Islands, it still does," *The Conversation*, last modified on March 30, 2017, <https://theconversation.com/yes-the-us-had-an-empire-and-in-the-virgin-islands-it-still-does-73567>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Harold Hongju Koh, "On American Exceptionalism," *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 55, No. 5 (2003), 1483.

⁶⁷ Samuel Flagg Bemis, "American Foreign Policy and the Blessings of Liberty", *American Historical Review* 67, No. 2 (January 1962),

<https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/samuel-flagg-bemis>

events such as the settlement in the United States, the Monroe doctrine, the Civil War and all foreign wars, to American imperialism.⁶⁸

However, not only historians debate on the subject of American imperialism and stretch its definition. IR scholars such as Steven Kettel and Alex Sutton go further on the idea of imperialism. They introduce the concept of ‘new imperialism’ in regard to American foreign behavior.⁶⁹ Other IR scholars focus more on the terms unipolarity and hegemony. Daniel H. Nexon and Thomas Wright, for instance, challenge the idea that a state becomes an empire only because it turns into a superpower.⁷⁰ They emphasize the importance to investigate the relationships between different states in order to conclude whether an empire exists at all. As the door on the debate on American imperialism has been opened by both historians and IR scholars, it is nowhere near closed leaving an opening for this research.

This thesis follows the argument that American imperialism exists. However, it disagrees with the idea of, among others, Bemis that the United States simply ‘accepted’ their new imperial role after the Spanish-American war. Moreover, this thesis argues that the eruption of the Spanish-American war is due to American imperialism and that United States foreign policy prior and during the war was focused on expanding their influence around the globe.

2.2. The United States in the midst of a transforming world

The Spanish-American War took place in the middle of a period that is characterized by multiple revolutions of modernity that transformed the world. During this period, which is often indicated to be from around 1840 until 1905, global transformation caused an uneven spread of development. Powerful states such as Britain, Germany, France, Japan, up to a point Russia, and the United States determined the meaning of ‘development’. They were able to use the increased capacity for communication and transportation to create a penetrative web of migration, finance, trade and military power projection. This created an enormous power gap between these ‘core’ states and the rest of the world. The states or territories that did not undergo the same development were left behind. The creation of this uneven world quickly took imperial form.⁷¹

Over more than a century before the eruption of the Spanish-American War, a transformation of domestic societies and the international order caused the emergence of a modern international society. Before the revolutions of modernity, international order was determined by title, tradition and precedence. However, starting in the seventeenth century (often the Peace of Westphalia is used as an indicator),

⁶⁸ Paul A. Kramer, “Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World”, *American Historical Review* (December 2011), 1366.

⁶⁹ Steven Kettel and Alex Sutton, “New Imperialism: Toward a Holistic Approach”, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 15, Iss. 2 (June 2013): 243-258.

⁷⁰ Daniel H. Nexon, and Thomas Wright “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate”, *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (2007), doi:10.1017/S0003055407070220.

⁷¹ Barry Buzan, “Universal Sovereignty,” in *The Globalization of International Society* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017), 5, DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198793427.003.0012.

‘continual revolutions’ in the order of powers, and the old status order had to make way for a competitive order that was decided upon material capabilities. After the Napoleonic wars and the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the European ‘core’ decided to not return to the *ancien regime* but to organize the international order by capability and power.⁷² The French Revolution (1789) unleashed the spread of popular sovereignty and republicanism against aristocratic rule and dynasticism.

A few benchmarks resulted in the institutionalization of international order based on core-periphery differences. Around 1840, the cloth trade between Britain and India was reversed. This illustrates the turnaround of the trade relations between Asia and Europe and the establishment of an ‘uneven’ relationship between the industrial ‘core’ and the periphery; the commodity supplier. The International Telecommunications Union was established in 1865, being the first intergovernmental organization. This symbolizes the emergence of institutions of global governance. When in 1870 Germany was unified, nationalism became an important institution of the international society. It also highlighted an important change in the distribution of power. Global modernity intensified inter-societal interactions and centralized the dynamics and importance of empire.⁷³

The modern practice of intervention changed due to the transformation of the nature of international hierarchy. In the pre-modern period, the nature of international order did not exist of superiors and inferiors. Neither had one of them the right or ability to systematically use force upon the other. An actor with a higher status was not necessarily more military capable than the other. During the eighteenth century, this state of affairs was changing. It became possible for rising powers, such as Russia or Prussia, to use their strength to determine their place in the international hierarchy. The international hierarchy turned from a diplomatic precedence order into a grading of powers. There was a new alignment between capability and status in which the first determined the latter. This hierarchy determined the ability of a power to intervene in the affairs of others. A superior ‘Great Power’ sovereign had the ability to intervene in the affairs of an inferior. The changing form of international hierarchy caused the modern world to turn into one in which a distinctive practice of intervention is legitimized by one’s place in the hierarchy.⁷⁴

While all of these transformations were happening within Europe, the United States played merely the role of bystander. The United States increasingly reported on the shifting dynamics on the other continent. In the New York Herald on October 23, 1870, an unknown author discusses the rise of a new empire; Germany. The author introduces the article by indicating that the “events which are now taking place in Europe are peculiarly suggestive”. The article is rather critical on the situation in Europe and its constant struggle of power. It emphasizes the repetitiveness of the transformation in balance of power.

⁷² Edward Keene, “International Hierarchy and the Origins of the Modern Practice of Intervention,” *Review of International Studies* 39 (October 8, 2013): 1087, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210513000193>.

⁷³ George Lawson, “The Global Transformation: The Nineteenth Century and the Making of Modern International Relations,” *International Studies Quarterly*, September 2013, 632, <https://doi.org/10.1111/isqu.12011>.

⁷⁴ Keene, “International Hierarchy and the Origins of the Modern Practice of Intervention,” 1090.

“Once again, after a period of comparative inactivity, the struggle for empire has been resumed. Once again the Popedom is in serious trouble. Once again new Powers and new leaders of men rise to the surface. And once more, empire seems to have changed its centre.” It concludes: “It is the latest seat of empire in the Old World. Let u hope that Germany will not abuse her power.”⁷⁵ Although this is just an example of articles written on the European situation, this article shows how the United States regarded the Old World and its constant struggle for power distant from the “New World” which included the United States. Within this power struggle, the United States was not yet an actor and did not regard itself a nation with ‘a seat of empire’.

During the period of the modern revolutions and especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, the North Atlantic world was, for both Europe and the United States, an arena of political and economic interest and interaction. Transatlantic relations were triangulated through imperialism in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Europeans and Americans were increasingly involved in trading webs of cultural and intellectual exchange; the traffic of capital, goods, people and ideas across the Atlantic Ocean were increasing rapidly. America was growing exponentially into an industrial might. However, Europe played the leading role. In fact, most Europeans did not consider America as a political, economic or cultural mode. In the decades before World War I, the world was rapidly globalizing, multipolar and Britain was the dominant economic and colonial power.⁷⁶

Within the United States a transformation was happening too. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the inequality between worker and capitalist, due to the growth of massive business enterprises, caused sharpened class divisions and started to extinguish the idea of American being the ‘land of opportunity’. The disparities of wealth created a public consciousness of America growing more into the Europe that they and their ancestors had fled. Due to the Civil War and its societal consequences, such as the abolition of slavery, racism and nativism became important themes within the United States. New barriers to the advancement of blacks were erected by white southerners whose status was no longer assured by the slavery institution. Previously, the transfusion of culture, energy and intellect that invigorated American society was brought by immigrants who were generally embraced by the United States. Now, due to the themes of racism and nativism, a sense of narrowed opportunity and the general feeling that the best days of America had passed.⁷⁷ The period between the 1870s and 1890s was characterized by an overall ambience of decline and the discontent of specific groups with grievances towards the class differences. In the 1890s, the situation deteriorated into the worst labor violence in the nation’s history. Tens of thousands of workers were idled due to hundreds of strikes. In July 1892 for instance, steel men at Andres Carnegie’s Homestead decided to strike to protest the reductions in wages

⁷⁵ James Gordon Bennett, “The Struggle for Empire in Europe - The Rise of a New Power,” *New York Herald*, October 23, 1870, 6.

⁷⁶ Mary Nolan, *The Transatlantic Century: Europe and America, 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 10–11.

⁷⁷ H.W. Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 6.

and to demand recognition of their union. Carnegie then hired many armed agents in order to break the strike. Pitched battles erupted between the workers and the agents, causing ten deaths. Besides private intentions to break the strikes, President Cleveland also displayed force over protests in Illinois in 1894. These violent initiatives to suppress strikes caused a general feeling that America was at war with itself. In the decades before the Spanish-American war, the country showed it had some screws loose and chances were that the nation might soon fall into pieces.⁷⁸

2.3. The Monroe Doctrine

Even though the United States had some internal problems, their foreign policy was nevertheless somewhat aggressive. In 1823, the United States had set some “ground rules” due to which they expected the Great Empires to limit their territory hunt to areas outside the America’s. On the other hand, the United States was talking of establishing outside territories themselves as well. Scholars such as John Fiske opened the idea of an overseas empire in the United States in the 1880s and 1890s by arguing the world belonged to strong and fit nations, such as the United States. The distinguished American writer, Captain A.T. Mahan, being an advocate of navalism, implemented the idea that naval power and world power are the same. A new steel navy was rushed to completion in 1883.⁷⁹ Due to the massive increase in its industrial production, American manufacturers needed foreign markets to sell their surpluses. All over the United States there were signs of an increasing national consciousness. American history and respect for the American flag was being taught in schools and the national colors were displayed in comic operas. By 1890, the reconstruction of the Civil War was completed and the continent was subdued; the Americans were looking for fresh worlds to conquer. An expansive America needed ‘elbow room’.⁸⁰

Firstly, it is important to discuss the Monroe Doctrine. In 1823, President James Monroe introduced this doctrine as a response to a national security crisis. His administration feared that the newly independent states of Spanish America were in danger of being recolonized by the European powers. This threat also applied to the United States itself. On December 2, 1823, President Monroe messaged to Congress that the Western Hemisphere was closed to European colonization. Any political intervention would be deemed by the United states as a threat to its security. The message stated that “the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for colonization by any European powers.”⁸¹ Even though the message appeared straightforward, it was also rather paradoxical. It proclaimed the United States opposition to European colonialism but it refrained from announcing a specific foreign policy of the

⁷⁸ Brands, 8.

⁷⁹ Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1964), 421.

⁸⁰ Bailey, 422.

⁸¹ James Monroe, “Message to Congress,” December 2, 1823, https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=161.

United States; it never placed limitations or constraints on American statesmen to go and conquer new territories in Spanish America.⁸²

During the nineteenth century, the United States had made several attempts to secure Hawaii as an outpost in the Pacific Ocean. When a British naval officer tried to seize Hawaii in 1843, the United States were alarmed. The acting Secretary of State stated even that the United States felt justified “in interfering by force to prevent its [Hawaii’s] falling into the hands of one of the great powers of Europe”.⁸³

By 1887, the United States had finally accomplished a treaty with Hawaii in which, besides a profitable arrangement on sugar, the United States was exclusively able to use the Pearl River Harbor as a naval station. In 1893, a group of American expatriates fomented a revolution against Queen Liliuokalani. They overthrew the government and called for annexation by the United States. However, the request for annexation was denied by President Cleveland. Later, during the Spanish-American war, Hawaii was annexed anyway as it was an important maritime outpost.⁸⁴

The case of Hawaii proves the extent to which the United States wanted to defend themselves and their neighbors against the great powers of Europe. However, this defense policy was also used to justify their own expansionist motives. While the United States tried to challenge the European powers and defend the Americas from European colonization, they were at the same time trying to establish influence over outside territories themselves. By increasing their naval power and by making treaties with these outside territories within the Pacific Ocean, the Monroe Doctrine was being used by the United States to establish some influence over foreign territories while framing it to be a safeguard for newly independent states in the Americas.

2.4. Conclusion

Thus, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, revolutions of modernity transformed the international order: popular sovereignty replaced the legitimacy of dynasticism. Where in the pre-modern world, a state’s status was determined by tradition, the modern international order was based on power and capability. States with little legitimacy in the pre-modern order were now able to climb the hierarchical ladder by increasing its economic and military capabilities and power. There was a tighter link between populations, states and territories which caused nationalism to reinforce sovereignty and territoriality. Being sovereign meant that other states had little business interfering in your affairs. The importance of territory increased imperialism on a global scale. Having an empire meant being able to join the international order. While the people within the core were turning into citizens of a nation-state, the people in the periphery were turning into subjects of new empowered empires and by the end of the nineteenth century, a Western-colonial international society on a global scale developed. Meanwhile, the

⁸² Jay Sexton, *The Monroe-Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth-Century America* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 4.

⁸³ Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 428.

⁸⁴ Brands, *Bound to Empire: The United States and the Philippines*, 17.

United States had emerged as an important industrial might. After having fought their Civil War, the United States was eager to play along in the game of empires. While fighting internal battles, such as racism and worker strikes, the United States started looking outward. Chapter 3 discusses the reason why Cuba was the 'victim' of this outward looking policy of the United States.

Chapter 3: The relationship between the United States and Cuba in the years before the Spanish-American War

The United States had a special relationship with Cuba, not only economically but also politically. In the decades prior to the war, Cuba bumped from economic boom into chaos and encountered a period of violence and conflict with its oppressor Spain. Meanwhile, the United States had just ‘survived’ the Civil War and was developing into one of the biggest industrial nations of the time. This chapter analyzes the economic relationship between the United States and Cuba prior to the war, the political relationship between the two, which was mostly instigated by the Cubans, and how these relationships differed from Cuba’s ‘motherland’ Spain.

3.1. The economic relationship between the United States and Cuba

“American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must and shall be ours.” Albert J. Beveridge, April 1897

The world economy of the nineteenth century rested on a couple important features such as the balance of power system, the liberal state, the international gold standard and the self-regulating market. Power and capability transformed the international system. Due to enormous industrial growth, the United States was able to become a dominant player within this international system. The rise of the United States to world power was due to its gains in the world economy relative to others. Andrew Carnegie, the American steel industrialist, stated: “The old nations of the earth creep on at a snail’s pace,” but the United States “thunders past with the rush of the express.”⁸⁵

The economic history of the Great Powers in the nineteenth century contains four leading features. Firstly, due to French influence, the attainment of personal freedom. After the American Civil War, the abolition of serfdom and slavery resulted in free movement, free choice of occupation and the reconstruction of different agricultural tenures and methods. Secondly, the industrial revolution in which Britain dominated. In 1815, France and Britain were the two dominant industrial nations. At that time, Germany was mainly agricultural, poor and divided, Russia was self-sufficing and had a serf agriculture, and the United States was the main exporter of tobacco and cotton. However, in the course of the nineteenth century Germany, Russia and the United States witnessed the industrialization of their agricultural state. Another important feature is the Transport Revolution. This Revolution caused the development of the Steamship and the Railway. By the influence of Great Britain, the penetration of great

⁸⁵ Thomas G. Paterson, “United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War,” *The History Teacher* 29 (1996): 343.

land areas resulted in new empires and new rivalries. A new mobility of people, goods and finance emerged and the abolition of distance caused world interdependence. The last feature is the change in national policies and international commercial relations. There is a continuation of mercantilism, the emergence of the liberal period (*Laissez-faire* in industry), the return to state regulation and protection in Europe after 1870, and national commercial competition found new markets and raw materials in colonial expansion.⁸⁶

American development

The industrial development of the United States is to be categorized in two parts. Part I is concerned with how the United States formed an economic whole by focusing on cotton and agriculture after the Civil War. Part II emphasizes the importance of growing the iron and steel industries, thereby increasing the United States importance in the world.⁸⁷The American Civil War (1861-1865), in which the Southern states succeeded from the Northern, caused an enormous political and economic transformation within the United States. Southern planters had huge debts due to losing the war and the abolition of slavery. The huge Southern plantations were divided into several smaller ones and the Southern economy needed to be reconstructed accordingly. The typical southern estate became, like the Northern ones, average sized farms which were unable to completely supply for themselves so Northern-like towns were formed. Whereas before the war the economic construction of the North and the South divide them, after the war, the North and South emerged as an economically unified nation.⁸⁸ Table 3.1. shows the effect of this transformation.

Table 3.1: *World's Sources of Cotton Supply in million pounds*

Years	U.S.A.	Brazil	West Indies	India	Egypt	Total
1851-55	1254,7	27,1	6,3	134,8	60	1482,9
1861-65	531,7	36,2	14,6	491,3	191,4	1265,2
1871-75	1682,3	108,8	42,3	538,5	238	2609,9
1881-85	2717,2	54,1	11,6	540,3	292,5	3615,7
1891-95	3773,6	50,5	13,6	453,4	455,7	4836,8
1901-05	5115,6	42,9	22,4	409,9	596,5	6187,3

⁸⁶ L.C.A. Knowles, *Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century: France, Germany, Russia and the United States* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1932), 3.

⁸⁷ Knowles, 188.

⁸⁸ Knowles, 89.

1906-08	5850	43,6	43,2	494,2	653,3	7084,3
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Source: L.C.A. Knowles, *Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century: France, Germany, Russia and the United States* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1932), 90; Own calculations.

The cotton industry increased enormously after the unification of the United States. This was a development of world importance as cotton became increasingly important due to the industrial revolution in Europe. As table 3.1 shows, prior to the Civil War, the United States accounted for 84,6 percent of the total world's cotton supply. During the Civil War, this dropped to 42,1 percent. Great Britain was one of the main importers of cotton during the nineteenth century; in 1859, Great Britain imported 73,7 percent of all United States cotton production.⁸⁹ As the Civil War caused an enormous decrease in the supply of cotton to, among others, Great Britain, there was a need for new cotton suppliers. After the outbreak of the Civil War, Great Britain formed the Cotton Supply Association who had the task to find non-American cotton suppliers. Even though India was the first country that had to transform into a cotton industry due to the American Civil War, eventually Egypt was 'chosen' as an eligible replacement of American cotton. Due to British investments and a reconstruction of the Egyptian economy, Egypt was able to start competing with American cotton.⁹⁰ In 1863, Great Britain imported 835,289 cwt cotton from Egypt, 201,814 cwt from Brazil and 3,878,757 cwt from the British East Indies (India).⁹¹ In that same year, Great Britain imported 'only' 57,090 cwt cotton from the United States. So, due to the American Civil War, other cotton producing countries had to step up and fill the cotton-supply gap. Although the cotton market increased in competition, the United States were still able to return to their dominant status after the Civil War. Due to their domestic transformation, the United States were able to account for 78 percent of the total cotton supply in 1891-95. Just before the eruption of the Spanish-American war, the world had become dependent on United States cotton again.

After the Civil War, not just the reconstruction of the Southern economy was a significant factor in the unification and economic growth of the United States. The great expansion to the American Middle-West was a significant for this development too. Due to the development of the railway, the Middle West became accessible and attracted many migrants. These migrants filled up the region and were motivated by the government to start building farms and to produce grain. This rapid increase in the production and export of grain caused the United States to become an important supplier of agricultural products.⁹² Table 2.2 shows the increase in total value of U.S. exports of agricultural products.

⁸⁹ James A. Mann, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain: Its Rise, Progress & Present Extent, Based upon the Most Carefully Digested Statistics* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, 1860), 113.

⁹⁰ Edward Meade Earle, "Egyptian Cotton and the American Civil War," *Political Science Quarterly* 41 (December 1926): 543.

⁹¹ "Miscellanea," *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 27 (1864): 132.; cwt is equal to one hundred pounds.

⁹² Knowles, *Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century: France, Germany, Russia and the United States*, 92.

Table 3.2: *The total value of the exports of agricultural products in the United States 1870-1900.*

Year	Million dollars
1870	361
1880	686
1890	630
1900	836

Source: L.C.A. Knowles, *Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century: France, Germany, Russia and the United States* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1932), 92.

Besides the growth in the production of agricultural goods, the second half of the nineteenth century also noticed an exponential growth of the American iron and steel. The emergence of this relatively ‘new’ industry caused a transformation of the relationship between economy and politics. Before and during the nineteenth century, Britain had been the greatest political and economic power of the world. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, the United States came to challenge this British hegemony. The United States share in the world trade rose from 10 to 11 percent while Britain’s share fell from 25 to 20 percent in the years 1880-1900. By 1890, the United States had taken over Britain’s position in the production of iron and steel. Between 1870 and 1900, the United States’ share of the production of manufactured goods rose from 23,3 to 30,1 percent while Britain’s share of declined from 31,8 to 19,5 percent. The average annual economic growth rate of Britain in the years 1870-1913 was 1.6 percent, whereas the American rate was 5 percent. So, in a few decades, the United States had become the dominant industrial power.⁹³ Not just the United States’ economic prosperity increased, its population did so as well. In 1890, the United States had the second largest (Russia being number one) population of the world. Although the United States was developing into a great power, it also encountered economic depressions between 1873 and 1897. Especially the depression of 1893-1897 was important for the United States as it changed their foreign economic policy. While growing into an industrial might, the efficient machines produced too many manufactured and industrial goods for the demand of domestic consumption. In order to sell all of their products, many American manufacturers were dependent on the willingness of foreign markets to import their products. If their marketing had been unsuccessful, or other countries had a successful wheat or cotton harvest, a surplus in the American goods caused deflation. In combination with a few failures of large banks or Wall Street firms, the United States fell into economic depression.⁹⁴ During the first half of the year 1893, American export dropped immensely and imports

⁹³ Aaron L. Friedberg, *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905* (Princeton University Press, 2010), 24–26.

⁹⁴ Walter Lafeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Cornell University Press, 1998), 9.

soared. As a result, European investments, which had become cornerstones of the United States industrial system, began to drop. Accompanied by a decrease in agricultural export, American business collapsed.⁹⁵ *The Commercial and Financial Chronicle* stated in August 1893 that “Never before has there been such a sudden and striking cessation of industrial activity... Mills, factories, furnaces, mines nearly everywhere shut down in large numbers ... and hundreds of thousands of men (were) thrown out of employment.”⁹⁶ Both conservatives and reformers started to believe that something needed to change drastically. It was generally believed that an expansionist foreign policy was the solution for both the immediate problem and to prevent such crises from happening again. An agreement was made in which both Democrats and Republicans from all groups and sections of the country agreed upon the idea that foreign policy should play an important part in the recovery of the depression of the 1890s and in preventing its recurrence. This consensus was based upon two ideas. The first idea was that the depression and social unrest within the country was a result of a lack of markets for the specific product of many manufacturers, merchants, farmers and others. Each group thought of foreign policy as being the opportunity to gain markets for their services or merchandise. Secondly, America’s prosperity and democracy in the past had been explained as being a result of expansion, although within its own the continent.⁹⁷ According to the United States, expansion would solve unrest, restore prosperity and preserve democracy.

As a result of emerging into one of the greatest industrial powers of the nineteenth century, the United States attracted increasing international capital. The amount of foreign investments increased annually in the United States, reaching its peak in 1899. By then, the total value of foreign investments in the United States was \$3,300,000,000.⁹⁸ As the American industrial revolution had proved to be profitable, much of its profits went straight back into American industrial innovations. Also, an increasing amount left the United States and went to Canada, Asia, Europe and Latin America. In 1890, a trend was noticeable in which dollars went to Paris and London to buy back American stocks at low prices. The United States started to export more than it imported and made up the difference by purchasing foreign stocks, buying back American securities and by building American-owned industries and transportation systems abroad.⁹⁹ Due to different legislation, such as measures for stronger central banking, the Homestead Act (which sought to develop interior markets and new opportunities for speculative capital), rail links between industries in the Midwest and the East, and contract labor laws due to which employers could import cheap labor, financiers and industrialists were able to build some kind of economic superstructure within the United States.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Lafeber, 151.

⁹⁶ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1962), 21.

⁹⁷ Appleman Williams, 24.

⁹⁸ Lafeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, 9.

⁹⁹ Lafeber, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Knowles, *Economic Development in the Nineteenth Century: France, Germany, Russia and the United States*, 200.

Cuba's economic situation prior to the war

After Cuba was colonized by the Spanish empire in 1550, its entire economy was dominated by the Spaniards. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Spain was economically backward and its colonial policy distorted the economic development of Cuba. Spain extracted enormous riches from her colonies and obstructed the growth of international relations of these colonies.¹⁰¹ The entire commerce of Cuba was focused on serving the Spanish empire and there was little commercial exchange on the island itself. There was a growing demand for manufactured goods by the Cuban population which was not being satisfied by the weak and backward industry of Spain. Between 1760 and 1830, there was progress in economic development on the island, due to the growth of commercial agriculture, the production of sugar and tobacco. Especially sugar proved to be a stable and beneficial commodity and came to perform a dominant role in Cuba's economy. In 1818 Spain authorized free trade between Cuba and other states which contributed to the boom of the Cuban economy.¹⁰² The construction of railroads was very important to the consolidation of Cuba's economy, its domestic market and for the economy of the island's more remote regions. The railroad lines, which lowered the transportation costs of sugar, united all regions to the main port thereby opening the most remote regions of Cuba to sugar cultivation. From the main port the sugar was exported to different destinations across the globe.¹⁰³

These destinations turned out to be mainly Europe and the United States. Due to a growing demand here, Cuba's sugar industry kept growing throughout the nineteenth century. In the 1880s, the Cuban sugar system had somewhat recovered from their Ten Years War and in the last decade of the nineteenth century, technological innovation and concentration gained momentum in the Cuban sugar industry. Due to increased competition and transforming market standards, the price of sugar lowered. Only the large-scale production Cuban mills were able to compete with the international economic pressure.¹⁰⁴ The smaller sugar enterprises were unable to keep up with the growing capital requirements that were necessary to manufacture sugar and produce sugar. They passed under the control of larger estates and a new system erupted. A large mill owner concentrated on sugar manufacturing while the farmers focused on the planting and harvesting of cane. Accompanied by the expansion of the sugar *latifundia*, which was possible due to the Ten Years War in which many landowners were killed and even more farms and estates were destroyed, the sugar industry blossomed in Cuba in the 1880s.¹⁰⁵

However, the increased large-scale production and the expansion of the cultivation zones within Cuba caused the displacement of the rural population. Because of the fact that a significant area of

¹⁰¹ Adelaida Zorina, "On the Genesis of Capitalism in Nineteenth-Century Cuba," *Latin American Perspectives* 2 (1975): 9–10.

¹⁰² Zorina, 11.

¹⁰³ Zorina, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Jules Robert Benjamin, *The United States and Cuba: Hegemony and Dependent Development, 1830-1934* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977), 3–4.

¹⁰⁵ Louis A. Pérez, "Toward Dependency and Revolution: The Political Economy of Cuba between Wars: 1878-1895," *Latin American Research Review* 18 (1983): 24.

agricultural land was now dedicated to the large-scale sugar production, many independent small farmers and peasants found themselves landless and unemployed. Old estates were passed onto new management: family farms, traditional holdings and unincorporated rural property disappeared in exchange for the sugar cane. Many of the farmers and peasants who were deprived from their independent livelihood and expelled from their land were angry and turned to banditry. After the Ten Years War, many insurgent veterans came home to either destroyed or expropriated farms. Without their land or employment, the former farmers joined outlaw bands. These groups of bandits grew exponentially and by the late 1890s, entire regions of the Cuban countryside had fallen under the control of these bandits.¹⁰⁶

So, instead of many small independent farmers, the sugar industry was now in the hands of a smaller group of sugar estate owners. They were the wealthy owners of sugar lands, mills and cattle ranches. These owners were still the same powerful elite of Cuba that existed before the Ten Years War, however, they now had to pay for their survival with their independence. American capital had made the technological innovations and increases in efficiency possible and the landed aristocracy had to guarantee its survival by exchanging their property for stocks in American corporations. Cuban landowners found themselves now in the seats of American corporate boards of directors with little authority of their previous owned land.¹⁰⁷ By the end of the 1880s, some 94 percent of Cuban sugar products ended up in American markets. The most powerful socio-economic class of Cuba had lost control of milling and financing sugar and had turned into local agents of American capital. Cuba was economically penetrated by the United States of America.

The United States and Cuba

In 1899, the book *American colonial handbook: A Ready Reference Book of Facts & Figures, Historical, Geographical, & Commercial, about Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Hawaii, & Guam* by Thomas Campbell-Copeland was published.¹⁰⁸ The book literally states it is a colonial handbook, thereby engaging directly in the American imperialism debate. Prior and shortly after this publication, the debate on whether the United States should acquire outside territory and whether one could consider the United States as being the metropole of an empire was rather heated. By publishing a “colonial handbook” of different countries in Latin America, countries that had just acquired their independence, the book offers an American imperialistic perspective on Cuba. Although the book does not speak for the entire United States of America, as there were also anti-imperialistic voices within the United States, it still proves there were imperialistic incentives within the United States regarding the island of Cuba. The book describes the attractiveness of the island by offering a detailed description of its geography, culture,

¹⁰⁶ Pérez, 126.

¹⁰⁷ Perez, 134.

¹⁰⁸ Campbell-Copeland, *A Ready Reference Book of Facts & Figures, Historical, Geographical, & Commercial, about Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Hawaii, & Guam*.

people, language and commerce and to what extent these elements are relevant for Americans. A chapter dedicated to the latter offers different statistics of the commerce between Cuba and the United States, and between Cuba and other countries. Regarding the Spanish-American war and American imperialism, the statistics of the book on the years 1893 and 1898 are rather useful. Table 3.3. shows the commerce between Cuba and the United States and Cuba and Spain in 1896, two years prior to the eruption of the Spanish-American war.

Table 3.3: *Cuba's commerce with the United States and Spain in dollars 1896*

Countries	Import from	Export to
United States	\$7,530,880	\$40.017.730
Spain	\$26.145.800	\$4.257.360
Total	\$66.166.754	\$94.395.536

Source: Thomas Campbell-Copeland, *American Colonial Handbook: A Ready Reference Book of Facts and Figures, Historical, Geographical, and Commercial, about Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Hawaii and Guam*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1899), 64-65.

There is a clear distinction between the commerce between Spain and Cuba and the United States and Cuba. Whereas Cuba was rather dependent on Spain for its imports, 39,5 per cent, the American markets were very important for Cuba to sell its export to, 42,4 percent.¹⁰⁹ However, not only did Cuba depend on the United States as a foreign market for their products. Moreover, the production and manufacturing of these products in Cuba was in the hands of American businesses. Between the American Civil War and 1897, foreign investment of the United States rose from \$75 million to \$685 million. This is a considerable amount as most United States industries did not bother to invest in foreign countries. American firms made significant foreign investments in five different industries. Copper, oil, banana, precious metals and sugar. American enterprises primarily invested in the sugar industry of Cuba.¹¹⁰ Sugar coming from Cuba supplemented the domestic production from the United States. These imports were, in considerable measure, products of American-controlled enterprises that operated abroad. Mills and sugar plantations represented a large part of American capital invested in foreign production. Since 1838, Atkins & Co., different commission merchants and sugar brokers furnished Cuban planters with supplies and materials on credit and made loans on the sugar and syrup they handled. Because of the Cuban guerilla wars against the Spanish government between 1868 and 1878, some of these debts became long overdue and were difficult to liquidate. In a couple of these cases, these mortgages were eventually settled causing the American enterprises to possess many of the sugar plantations. For instance, in 1883 Atkins & Co. settled a mortgage which brought them into the possession of a sugar plantation of 4,500

¹⁰⁹ Campbell-Copeland, 64.

¹¹⁰ Stanley Lebergott, "The Returns to U.S. Imperialism, 1890-1929," *The Journal of Economic History* 40 (June 1980): 231-32.

acre known as Soledad. Ten years later, this property had grown into 12000 acres. Atkins & Co. was one of the largest American investors in Cuban sugar but it was not the first and not the only one. Other merchants and bankers settled the Cuban debts in the same matter.¹¹¹ During the 1880s and early 1890s, the sugar industry transformed. Price competition from European beet sugar, quality competition from American chemical engineers and the McKinley Tariff of 1890 caused most Cuban manufacturers to go out of business. The sugar industry had to develop and producers installed new power mills and imported their machines from the U.S. The smaller, poorer and less efficient planters lacked the funds that were necessary for this modernization and needed to sell their plantation to bigger producers. Due to this reorganization, the investment of American capital in mills and plantations was encouraged. Different American partnerships such as the one between American Sugar Refining and the Atkins family in 1892 to buy the Trinidad Sugar Company.¹¹² So, while Cuba was dependent on American markets and American capital in order to make money of their sugar products, American businesses invested a lot of money into the Cuban sugar industry.

In December 1886, American Consul Ramon O. Williams messaged to Assistant Secretary of State, James N. Porter: “The Island is now entirely dependent upon the market of the United States, in which to sell its sugar cane products; also that the existence of the sugar plantations, the railroads used in transporting the products of the plantations in the shipping ports of the island, the export and import trades of Cuba based on thereon, each including hundreds of minor industries, such as the agricultural and mechanical trades, store-houses, wharves, lighters, stevedores, brokers, clerks and bankers, real estate owners, and shop-keepers of all kinds, and holders of the public debt, are now all directly related to the market of the United States, to the extent of 94 percent for their employment.”¹¹³ This statement of Ramon O. Williams to Assistant Secretary of State, James N. Porter, sums up the economic relationship between the United States and Cuba. During the 1890s, the United States desperately needed foreign markets to cope with its economic depression at home and Cuba needed foreign investments to keep up with the industrialization of sugar cultivation. By the end of the nineteenth century, the United States fully penetrated Cuba’s economy, thereby establishing a new foreign market for their products and a supplier for its people’s demand for sugar.

Total trade

As table 3.4 shows, the commerce in merchandise between Cuba and the United States reached a peak in 1893. By the end of 1897, the trade of the United States with Cuba accounted for around \$18 million in imports and around \$8 million of exports.

¹¹¹ Cleona Lewis, *America’s Stake in International Investments* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1938), 264–65.

¹¹² Lewis, 266–67.

¹¹³ Quoted in Pérez, “Toward Dependency and Revolution: The Political Economy of Cuba between Wars: 1878-1895,” 134.

Table 3.4: *The trade of the United States with Cuba since 1893 in American dollars*

Description	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897
	<i>Dollars.</i>	<i>Dollars.</i>	<i>Dollars.</i>	<i>Dollars.</i>	<i>Dollars.</i>
Imports:					
Free	66.049.369	67.418.289	17.684.765	2.074.769	1.270.059
Dutiable	12.657.137	8.259.972	35.186.494	37.942.967	17.136.756
Total	78.706.506	75.678.261	52.871.259	40.017.730	18.406.815
Exports:					
Domestic	23.604.094	19.855.237	12.533.260	7.312.348	7.599.757
Foreign	553.604	270.084	274.401	218.532	660.019
Total	24.157.698	20.125.321	12.807.661	7.530.880	8.259.776

Source: Thomas Campbell-Copeland, *American Colonial Handbook: A Ready Reference Book of Facts & Figures, Historical, Geographical, & Commercial, about Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Hawaii, & Guam* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1899), 64.

It is important to investigate to what extent the relationship between the United States and Cuba was special compared to other countries prior to the Spanish-American war. dependent on Cuba in the years before the Spanish-American war in order to see whether their involvement in the war had an economic incentive. Table 3.5., coming from *Commerce of the United States and Europe with American Countries, 1851-1895, with Trade under Reciprocity Agreements of 1890* and published by the Bureau of Statistics in 1896, shows the trade of the United States with other American countries in 1894. Although this source offers only statistics until 3 years prior to the war, it still gives an indication of the difference of the relationship between Cuba and the United States and other Latin American countries and the U.S.

Table 3.5: *Trade of the United States with other American countries in dollars, 1894*

American countries	Import	Export
Central America	7.481.665	3.229.935
British West Indies	13.017.178	8.512.016
Cuba	75.678.261	20.125.321
Other	6.336.486	4.489.110
Brazil	79.360.159	13.866.006
Guiana, British	4.223.970	2.414.720
Other American countries	81.071.917	100.168.412
Total American countries	267.169.666	152.805.522

Source: United States Dept. of the Treasury, Bureau of Statistics, *Commerce of the United States and Europe with American Countries, 1851-1895: with trade under reciprocity agreements of 1890* (Washington: Government Print. Off., 1896), 7.

Cuba and the United States had a special relationship prior to the Spanish-American war. In total, the United States imported from American countries for \$267.169.666. The imports coming from Cuba accounted for 28,3 percent of that. Only one other American country imported more to the United States, which was Brazil. Cuba was also an important export country, accounting for 13,2 percent of the total export with American countries. Compared to other American countries, Cuba was an important trade partner of the United States.

In 1894, a significant change happened in the trade between the United States and Cuba. It is important to acknowledge and analyze this change as it happened just three years prior the eruption of the Spanish-American war. The following table shows the decrease in export between the U.S. and Cuba in 1894 and 1895.

Table 3.6: *Exports of merchandise from the United States to Cuba in the years 1894 and 1895*

Articles (in dollars)	1894	1895
Iron and steel and manufactures of:		
Stationary engines	62.830	30.629
Wire	248.027	65.992
Leather and manufactures of:	7993	7539
All other articles	7.179.602	4.814.179
Total exports of merchandise	20.125.321	12.807.661

Source: United States. Dept. of the Treasury. Bureau of Statistics, *Commerce of the United States and Europe with American countries, 1851-1895: with trade under reciprocity agreements of 1890* (Washington: Government Print. Off., 1896), 21.

In 1895 the export from the United States dropped from \$20,125,321 merchandise the year before to \$12,807,661, meaning it decreased with around 36 percent. Zooming in, the biggest change happened in the export of iron and steel and its manufactures, and the category ‘other articles’. Less than half of the stationary engines were sold to Cuba and less than one third of wire was exported to Cuba from the United States. What happened in 1895 that the commerce between the United States and Cuba declined? While in the decades before, Cuba had built up a profitable dependency on the United States, Cuba’s boom ended quickly in 1894. The Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act of 1894 established a new duty of 40 percent on all sugar going into the United States. The previous reciprocal trade agreements between Spain

and the United States were dismantled by the Tariff and Spain built up its protectionist wall around Cuba.¹¹⁴ But, the impact of the 1894 crisis did not only reach the sugar system. Traders, retailers and merchants who had replaced their commercial ties with Spain for contacts with the United States were now ruined. Prices increased, unemployment rose and commodity goods decreased. American imports dropped and shipping declined causing the availability of the higher-priced products to decrease. The brief feeling of prosperity among the Cubans due to their close economic ties with the U.S. made it difficult for them to return to the regimen of Spain.¹¹⁵

3.2. The political Relationship between the United States and Cuba

Cuban revolution

A transformation of Cuba's economic position, that emerged from 1878 until 1895, eventually caused the outburst of the Cuban Revolution in 1895. In the 1880s, the Cuban sugar industry had been rationalized and the fundamental social and economic conditions on the island had been altered by the abolition of slavery. European countries had been expanding their beet sugar production which caused the international market for cane sugar to decrease affecting the price of the product. Because of the fall of the sugar prices, Cuba was inclined to drastically change its sugar industry. Due to American investments and its sugar market, the economy of Cuba, entirely dependent on its sugar industry, was able to revive by the end of the 1880s. Due to American capital the mechanization of transport was financed and more efficient sugar-refining mills and larger cane plantations on the island were established. In the early 1890s, the Cuban sugar production and exports soared and Cuba attracted more and more American capital. However, the boom ended quickly when the United States changed its tariff legislation in 1894, placing high duties on sugar and when the trade relationship between Spain and the United States deteriorated.¹¹⁶

Extreme poverty within the working-class, the emergence of recently freed slaves who faced social and economic repression, and the inability of Spain to provide autonomy for Cuba as was promised in 1878, eventually caused the outbreak of the war of independence in Cuba in February 1895. In the beginning of the war, the Cuban revolutionary leaders were divided on their plans for the future relations with the United States. Some were willing to consider a close relationship with their American neighbor while others feared for annexation by the U.S. Two important figures within the revolutionary movement were José Martí, who had organized and directed the movement, and Maximo Gomez, the military head. Martí had set the goal to secure the independence of Cuba before the United States would be able to annex the island. Gomez also believed that the Cubans were able to win independence without the

¹¹⁴ Pérez, 137.

¹¹⁵ Pérez, 139.

¹¹⁶ John L. Offner, *An Unwanted War: The Diplomacy of the United States and Spain Over Cuba, 1895-1898* (UNC Press Books, 1992), 2.

intervention of the United States. Tomas Estrada Palma, who had been the president of the Cuban Republic during the Ten Years War, believed that it was desirable and inevitable to establish a special relationship with their American neighbor. When José Martí died in 1895 in a military clash, Tomas Estrada Palma became the leader of Cuba's Revolutionary Party. Palma argued that only the United States provided a market large enough to sell the Cuban sugar and that the island's prosperity depended on commercial access to this market. He also thought that because of the destructiveness of the Cuban war, the island would need new capital investment which would need to come from the United States.¹¹⁷

At the same time, Spanish politicians were trying to maintain political authority on the island. Madrid had regulated Cuba's trade in order to benefit Spanish economic interests. Spanish exports to the island rose while the imports from it decreased causing the Cuban economy to decline rapidly.¹¹⁸ Spain's inability to solve this problem only added fuel to the rebellious fire on the island. When the rebellion began, the Spanish prime minister, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, who had been appointed only a few weeks after the outbreak of the war, sent Martinez de Campos to the island. De Campos, the captain general, had also negotiated the end of the previous Cuban rebellion, the Ten Years War. Quickly after his arrival, he realized that the new insurrection was much bigger than the previous one and he believed that a political solution would be out of the question. He advised Canovas that an all-out would involve too much loss of life and instead he suggested that another officer should assume the command. A new general was appointed, General Valeriano Weyler who was known to be a ruthless and vigorous officer.¹¹⁹

Cuba's Revolutionaries and the United States

While the United States was organizing international commercial conventions and discussing diplomatic possibilities, Cuba was fighting its war of independence against Spain. The Cubans had set up a general legation in the U.S. called the *Junta*. It was appointed in September 1895 by an Assembly which elected Tomas Estrada Palma as President at the same time. Palma had the authority to engage in diplomatic relations with different other countries such as the U.S. The *Junta* was composed of naturalized Cubans who lived particularly in American cities along the Atlantic coast. The Cuban League, the *Junta*'s American counterpart, was made up of bona-fide American citizens which organized affiliated clubs everywhere in the U.S. The goal of these two organizations was to gain American material and moral aid for their cause. The Cuban Revolutionary Party believed that their own aims were only achieved by aid of the United States. The *Junta* organized "Sympathy Meetings", theatrical performances, carnivals, public addresses, its own newspaper and distributed propaganda pamphlets.¹²⁰ The most important task of the

¹¹⁷ Offner, 3.

¹¹⁸ Offner, 12.

¹¹⁹ Offner, 12.

¹²⁰ George W. Auxier, "The Propaganda Activities of the Cuban Junta in Precipitating the Spanish-American War, 1895-1898," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 19, no. 3 (1939): 287-88.

Junta was the practice of filibustering. This enterprise originated from Jose Marti but after his death Estrada Palma carried on the activities. Soon, the “Cuban Legation” was established in Washington where a campaign was started to facilitate recognition for Cuba’s belligerency by the government of the United States.¹²¹

The book *Liberty: The Story of Cuba* by Horatio S. Rubens offers an extended account of an eyewitness during the diplomatic affairs between the United States and Cuba right before the eruption of the Spanish-American War.¹²² Rubens was general counsel of the *Junta* during the Cuban revolution. He had to handle the problems that arose from the efforts of the Cubans while trying to gain recognition from the United States. As an American, he had one of the closest relationships with Cuban revolutionists and obtained a lot of “inside” information.¹²³ Therefore, the book is considered reliable in analyzing the diplomatic affairs between Cuba and the U.S. However, it should be noted that the book is still an eyewitness account which is never entirely objective. Nevertheless, it is interesting to explore what such an eyewitness offers to this analysis. On the job of the *Junta*, Rubens states: “So, we had in Washington a little war of our own which was to continue for three years, depending moreover on the progress of the real war in Cuba. This war in Cuba, in turn, depended on the war between the American Government, incited by Spain, and the Expeditionary Department of the Cuban Junta, which had to supply the major war with a steady flow of munition supplies.”¹²⁴

The *Junta* organized its activities based on the achievement of the American people’s sympathy. The *Junta* organized different Sympathy Meetings often at opportune moments in important cities of the United States. The gatherings were often addressed by prominent local people, or officers of the Cuban League, and were accompanied by advertisements in “friendly” American press (this idea of “friendly press” is discussed extensively in chapter 4).¹²⁵ Appendix A shows the perception of this Cuban-American Fair in May 1896 at Madison Square Garden in such an American newspaper. On the occasion, *The Journal*, a New York newspaper, writes: “Thousands Throng the Cuban Fair, Madison Square Garden filled with the Friends of Freedom.”¹²⁶

Besides their sympathy policy, the Cubans implemented another strategy in obtaining a United States intervention. Using their ‘scorched earth’ policy, in which they devastated the island so heavily that the Spaniards would want to pull out themselves. The United States, who had around \$50 million invested in the Island, would be forced to intervene to maintain their investments, or would need to pay

¹²¹ Auxier, 288.

¹²² Horatio S. Rubens, *Liberty, the Story of Cuba* (New York: Brewer, Warren & Putnam, Inc., 1932).

¹²³ Herminio Portell Vilá, review of *Liberty, the Story of Cuba*, by Horatio S. Rubens, *Hispanic American Historical Review* 13, no. 1 (1933): 100.

¹²⁴ Rubens, *Liberty, the Story of Cuba*, 109.

¹²⁵ Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 451–52.

¹²⁶ “A Scene in Madison Square Garden Last Night at the Cuban Fair,” *The Journal*, (New York, May 26, 1896), 2.

‘protection money’ to the Cubans. By blackmailing the American businesses, the Cubans were able to finance a part of their revolt.¹²⁷

3.3 What was the relationship between Cuba and Spain?

In order to investigate whether the United States had a ‘special’ relationship with Cuba in the years prior to the Spanish-American war, it is necessary to compare Cuba’s relationship with its metropole, Spain. Whereas other European colonies in the Americas emerged as new national states in the course of the nineteenth century, due to anticolonial movements, Cuba remained “loyal” to Spain.¹²⁸ However, in 1868 Cuba engaged in a rebellion against its colonial oppressor which eventually turned into a Ten Years’ War. Although having lost this conflict, the separatist effort was still present in Cuba in the decades after it. By the end of the nineteenth century, Spain was not the principal or primary empire in the world, causing Madrid to try to preserve the island at all costs, not only for colonial profits but also for national pride. On the island, the local elites were the principal beneficiaries of the Spanish empire. They consisted of Creoles and *peninsulares* and relied on Spain to suppress social challenges and on the United States for expansion of their economic sources. This caused the colonial elites to be torn between two nations. The elite’s biggest fear was rebellion and upheaval. They preferred to defend their privilege and security over gaining independence thereby supporting the Spanish empire in their aim to control the island.¹²⁹ An economic conflict erupted between the metropolis and her colony; between those who served the needs of the Spanish empire and those who stimulated Cuban interests.

After the Ten Years War, the discussion on the future of Cuba’s political status and the relationship with Spain was still present. The Spanish sought to reconcile by promising reforms and institutional resolutions. When these political reforms and promises remained unfulfilled and the Cuban economy collapsed by 1894, the “loyal” relationship between Spain and Cuba was shattered causing the island to be ripe for rebellion.¹³⁰

3.4 Conclusion

The relationship between Cuba and the United States in the years prior to the Spanish-American war was special. On the one hand, the island and the recently emerged superpower were economically intertwined as the United States was the number one export country of Cuba and American business had taken over Cuba’s sugar industry. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Cuba had already become dependent on American markets to sell its sugar. By the 1890s, the United States had penetrated Cuba’s economy by investing in and taking over these sugar plantations. This trend is noticeable when comparing the trade

¹²⁷ Auxier, “The Propaganda Activities of the Cuban Junta in Precipitating the Spanish-American War, 1895-1898,” 295.

¹²⁸ There are different causes for this which will not be discussed here. This subject is thoroughly examined in David Sartorius’ *Ever Faithful: Race, Loyalty, and the Ends of Empire in Spanish Cuba* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013).

¹²⁹ Louis A. Pérez, *Cuba between Empires, 1878-1902* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1983), xvi.

¹³⁰ Pérez, 38.

between the United States with other American countries. Cuba is both the biggest importer of American products and second biggest exporter to the United States compared to other American countries. Cuba's economic dependency on the United States caused its entire industry to collapse when the Tariff Act of 1894 was implemented. Cuba's economic boom that it had experienced in the years due to American investments collapsed and caused unemployment and poverty throughout the island. This transformation eventually caused the outbreak of Cuba's insurrection in 1895. The United States kept a close eye on these developments on the island and the Cuban *Junta* was determined to gain United States help fighting their war of independence. The United States had already been occupied with the expansion-question for some decades. When president McKinley entered office in 1897, two years into the Cuban insurrection, there was only one question left: was the United States going to 'save' the Cubans, and thereby establish outside territory, by engaging in the Spanish-American war? Chapter 4 sets out the course of events in the United States toward the Spanish-American war.

Chapter 4: The eruption of the war

“In view of these facts and of these considerations, I ask the Congress to authorize and empower the President to take measure to secure a full and final termination of hostilities between the government and of Spain and the people of Cuba, and to secure in the island the establishment of a stable government, capable of maintaining order and observing its international obligations, insuring peace and tranquility and the security of its citizens as well as our own, and to use the military and naval forces of the United States as may be necessary for these purposes.”

President McKinley, April 11, 1898

Message Regarding Cuban Civil War

This message is the official request of President McKinley to enter a war with Spain over the island of Cuba. This thesis asks the question to what extent American imperialism was an incentive of the United States to engage in this war. To indicate the importance of American imperialism, it is essential to discuss the reasons that were officially communicated toward the public on the matter. This chapter asks what the official reasons of the United States were and analyzes important events just prior to the eruption of the war. It also discusses American public opinion by analyzing what was published in the press on the Cuban insurrection and a possible involvement of the United States in the war.

4.1. American politics prior to the war

The political climate of the United States in the 1890s is to be characterized by economic turmoil and expansionism. Because of the economic crisis of the 1890s, many different sections of American society encountered chaos and revolution. The American people generally believed that something drastic had to be done to prevent such a crisis to ever happen again. There was a broad support for expansion, particularly overseas expansion; both the liberals and conservatives and Republicans and Democrats agreed upon this. This agreement was based on two ideas. Firstly, many manufacturers, merchants and farmers thought the depression to be a result of a lack of foreign markets. This group wanted a foreign policy as a means of acquiring enough markets for their products.¹³¹ Secondly, America’s prosperity and democracy had in the past been explained as a result of its expansion across the continent. Once again, according to this idea, expansion would be the way to solve unrest, restore prosperity and preserve democracy. This generalization of the relationship between prosperity, democracy and expansion evoked responses from different political and ideological groups in the country.¹³²

President Grover Cleveland, inaugurated in 1893, and his Secretary of State, Richard Olney took a militant stake regarding an American dominance in the Western Hemisphere. In regard to the Hawaii

¹³¹ Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 22.

¹³² Appleman Williams, 23–24.

situation in 1893, he withdrew from annexation from consideration by the Senate but he kept the American forces in place on the island and he recognized the American-dominated Republic of Hawaii which was established on July 4, 1894.¹³³ Doing so, Cleveland appears to establish the broad features of what eventually became America's non-colonial but imperial expansion before the Spanish-American war.¹³⁴ Most commercial and industrial leaders were enthusiastic about this foreign policy. Moreover, for around two years before the Spanish-American War, American industrialists and been aware and concerned with overproduction in their country and the necessity of foreign markets. They emphasized the struggle they encountered against other industrial nations in competing for these foreign markets.¹³⁵ The United States Investor stated that "an outlet for surplus stocks becomes an imperative necessity".¹³⁶ Also, Theodore C. Search, who was the President of the National Association of Manufacturers, stated in 1897: "Many of our manufacturers have outgrown or are outgrowing their home markets and the expansion of our foreign trade is their only promise of relief".¹³⁷

From Cleveland to McKinley

The focus on overseas expansion in regard to America's foreign policy did not change when William McKinley became president in 1897. On June 2, 1897, the International Commercial Conference was opened by an address of President McKinley.¹³⁸ Not only important American political figures were attentive at the conference, such as a number of Ministers and members of McKinley's cabinet, but also representatives of foreign countries: about fifty delegates of foreign commercial bodies coming mainly from Mexico and Central and South America. The speech begins by emphasizing the importance of the presence of representatives of "our sisters republics of this continent".¹³⁹ Later, McKinley states that "Not only has a wonderful demonstration been made of the products and advancement of our country, but those of all the American Republics. A spirit of friendly and mutually advantageous interchange and co-operation has been exemplified, which is in itself an inspiring help, not only to trade and commerce, but to international comity and good will." He adds "In order that new markets may be opened and a larger trade profitably conducted, the manufacturer must have the opportunity of becoming familiar with the character of the goods desired by the consumer."¹⁴⁰ This statement sums up the sole purpose of such a convention as the International Commercial Conference in Philadelphia. First, it is to discuss commercial conditions in all ends of the world and the needs to facilitate trade between all these parts of the world.

¹³³ Appleman Williams, 23.

¹³⁴ Appleman Williams, 23.

¹³⁵ Martin J. Sklar, "The N.A.M. and Foreign Markets on the Eve of the Spanish-American War," *Science & Society* 23, no. 2 (1959): 162.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 29.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Sklar, "The N.A.M. and Foreign Markets on the Eve of the Spanish-American War," 139.

¹³⁸ Address was published in "The Commercial Museum," *The New York Times*, June 3, 1897, 3, <https://timesmachine-nytimes-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/timesmachine/1897/06/03/issue.html>.

¹³⁹ "The Commercial Museum," 3.

¹⁴⁰ "The Commercial Museum," 3.

Second, it is to acquaint the representatives of the other countries with the commercial and industrial development of the United States and its ability to manufacture and sell products equally to other great industrial nations. Lastly, it is an attempt to secure business abroad.¹⁴¹ This address is an example of President McKinley's thoughts on overseas economic expansion: it is important for the United States to overcome and prevent massive economic downturns. This active and general support for economic expansion by the United States President only one year before the eruption of the war is not to be neglected as a motive to engage in the war. The coming of the war in Cuba is partly a consequence of the conviction of American economic and political leaders that military intervention was necessary to deal with domestic issues and foreign policy.¹⁴²

On the matter of the Cuban revolution, President McKinley's policy initially did not differ much from that of his predecessor. Cleveland had stated in December 1895 that the United States' commercial exchanges with the island were in danger. One year later, in December 1896, Cleveland publicly announced his desire to pacify the island. According to Cleveland, either Spain ended the rebellion promptly, or "this government will be compelled to protect its own interests and those of its citizens, which are coincident with those of humanity and civilization generally, by resorting to such measures as will promptly restore to the Island the blessings of peace."¹⁴³ However, knowing his term was coming to an end, he nuanced this last statement by adding: "it can not be reasonably assumed that the hitherto expectant attitude of the United States will be indefinitely maintained."¹⁴⁴

Stephen Grover Cleveland lost the elections in November 1896 to William McKinley. There is some discussion between historians on the character of President McKinley in relation to the war. On the one hand, scholars such as William Appleman Williams state that McKinley reiterated the demand of Cleveland for swift pacification of the island and increased pressure on Spain. According to Williams, President McKinley thought the conflict in Cuba as a threat to the prosperity of the United States that it was Spain's obligation to 'fix'.¹⁴⁵ However, scholars such as Thomas H. Bailey are convinced that McKinley was a man that hated war and was a willing servant of business interests. Bailey argues that McKinley made serious efforts to settle the Cuban dispute through the channels of diplomacy.¹⁴⁶ This thesis ignores the debate on McKinley's personal affiliations with Cuba and the war and focuses on the events that actually occurred. On April 10, 1898, word came from Minister Woodford in Madrid that Spain would bend the knee to the two demands of the United States for them to ascertain: Spain would revoke concentration throughout Cuba and the commander of the army was instructed to grant an

¹⁴¹ Wilfred H. Schoff, "The International Commercial Congress - Philadelphia, October, 1899," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 15 (1900): 81.

¹⁴² Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 29.

¹⁴³ Quote in Appleman Williams, 31.

¹⁴⁴ Quote in Appleman Williams, 32.

¹⁴⁵ Appleman Williams, 35.

¹⁴⁶ Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 459.

armistice and facilitate peace. However, the Cuban insurgents did not accept the Spanish terms and the war would still go on. So, McKinley, once again, had to choose whether to go to war or not.¹⁴⁷

4.2. The eruption of the War

On April 11, 1898, President McKinley asked Congress for permission to go to war with Spain to secure the termination of hostilities between the island and Spain.¹⁴⁸ After three years of fighting between the Cuban *insurrectos* and the Spanish oppressors, President McKinley was determined to establish peace and a stable government on Cuba.¹⁴⁹ In his message to Congress, McKinley gives two reasons why the United States should go to war with Spain over Cuba. “The present revolution is but the successor of other similar insurrections which have occurred in Cuba against the dominion of Spain, extending over a period of nearly half a century, each of which, during its progress, has subjected the United States to great effort and expense in enforcing its neutrality laws, caused enormous losses to American trade and commerce caused irritation, annoyance, and disturbance among our citizens, and by the exercise of cruel, barbarous, and uncivilized practices of warfare, shocked the sensibilities and offended the humane sympathies of our people.” Thus, according to McKinley, the United States should engage in the war because American trade was being harmed by the insurrection and because the Spaniards were acting extraordinary inhumane and cruel in their warfare against the Cubans. In the message, McKinley also emphasizes “the refusal of the Spanish Government then in power to consider any form of mediation”. Lastly, McKinley argues the most important reason for intervention to be the fact that the affairs of Cuba were a constant menace to the United States peace. According to McKinley, the war caused the lives and liberty of American citizens to be in constant danger and their property to be destroyed using the destruction of *the Maine* as an example.¹⁵⁰ The message caused Congress to engage in passionate debates. Newspapers such as the *London Times* wrote about the heated discussions. Apparently books were thrown, members were “running down the aisles like madmen” and “excitement was at fever heat”.¹⁵¹ On April 19, 1898, the final word was out: Congress declared war upon Spain. The declaration of war consisted of four elements: Cuba was declared free, Spain was demanded to withdraw, the President was directed to use armed force to achieve this and any intention of the annexation of Cuba by the United States was disclaimed. Approved by the President on April 25, the war on Spain could begin.¹⁵²

Although the incentives mentioned by McKinley appear legit, there were other motivations of the United States to interfere in the war with Spain. McKinley speaks of the cruelty of the Spaniards’

¹⁴⁷ Bailey, 460.

¹⁴⁸ President McKinley, “Message Regarding Cuba Civil War,” <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-11-1898-message-regarding-cuban-civil-war>.

¹⁴⁹ John L. Offner, “McKinley and the Spanish-American War,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 341 (February 18, 2004): 50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5705.2004.00034.x>.

¹⁵⁰ President McKinley, “Message Regarding Cuba Civil War.”

¹⁵¹ Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 463.

¹⁵² Bailey, 463.

warfare and the American spirit to ‘aid’ the Cubans. This ‘spirit’ was, to say the least, fueled by Yellow Journalism.

4.3. Yellow Journalism

The outburst of the Cuban revolution turned out to be a wonderful opportunity for yellow journalism to sell newspapers using imaginative illustrations and suggestive headlines and by taking reckless liberties with the truth.¹⁵³ Appendix B. shows the cover of the *New York Journal* on February 17, 1896. While the report of the colonial government of Cuba stated that the explosion that destroyed the naval vessel had occurred on board, different newspapers published rumors of how the Spaniards sank the ship. Later, the explosion turned out to come from a mine in the harbor which yellow journalism happily framed to be an incentive for war. American yellow press emphasized the devastating consequences of the Spanish response on the Cuban insurrection for American people and businesses. They stressed how American property was destroyed in Cuba, but ignored the fact that this damage was actually done by the *insurrectos*.¹⁵⁴ Not only was the yellow press interested in acquiring scoops, they also created them themselves. An example is the *New York Journal* of October 10th, 1897 which headlines “AN AMERICAN NEWSPAPER ACCOMPLISHES AT A SINGLE STROKE WHAT THE RED TAPE OF DIPLOMACY FAILED UTTERLY TO BRING ABOUT IN MANY MONTHS”.¹⁵⁵ This article describes how a reporter of the *Journal* broke a young Cuban woman out of her cell and how he smuggled the woman into the United States. According to the *Journal* her only crime was that he defended her virtue against a brutal Spanish officer. Later it turned out that the woman had been involved in the revolt and had therefore been imprisoned.¹⁵⁶

Yellow journalism also exaggerated the atrocity stories of how the Spanish treated the Cubans. Although the conditions in Cuba were definitely horrible, the yellow press took it a step further. American people were eager for the horrific tales and Pulitzer and Hearst were more than happy to provide as these stories helped the *New York Journal* and *New York World* to sell over 800,000 newspapers a day.¹⁵⁷

What about the ‘normal’ press?

It was not just yellow press that instigated American passion over the Cuban conflict. ‘Normal’ American press also wrote increasingly about the Cuban insurrection. All together, press was an important factor in the decision of the United States to go to war as they provided a stream of stories which emphasized Spanish aggression in Cuba. These stories contained Spanish abuse of civil rights and Cuban heroism.

¹⁵³ Bailey, 453.

¹⁵⁴ Bailey, 453.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Bailey, 453.

¹⁵⁶ Bailey, 454.

¹⁵⁷ Bailey, 454.

Although these stories might not have fired the first bullet, they helped shape an environment in the United States in which the public was open to wage war with Spain.¹⁵⁸ In the months leading up to the war, the American press such as the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* paid increasing attention to Cuba. Different newspapers riveted the public with news about Cuban affairs. Readers of newspapers did not just read one story about Cuba, they were overflowed with stories about the war on the island.¹⁵⁹ Table 4.1. shows the frequencies and average per day of stories about Cuba, percentages of pro-Cuba valence and pro-Spain valence stories. An example of a newspaper selling stories with an interventionist incentive is the *New York Journal*. On March 26, 1898 they publish a paper with the entire front page covered with articles on American intervention in Cuba. One of the headlines is “Spaniards Refuse to Back Down: They Appeal to Europe and Decline to Let Us Send Supplies in Warships” thereby framing Spain as the enemy. The same cover headlines that “Board Finds Spanish Officials Moved Maine to Her Fatal Anchorage”. (New York Journal, 26 March 1898). American newspapers portrayed the Cubans as victims who were fighting for their independence and the Spaniards as the aggressors, thereby endeavoring a considerable appeal to American citizens.¹⁶⁰ Table 4.1. also indicates that not just yellow press or newspapers from New York wrote a lot about the insurrection. To the contrary, the average number of stories about Cuba written by newspapers throughout the entire United States is 5.78, ranging from 1.5 to 9.4 stories per day. Of the conservative newspapers, 14.7 percent of the stories on Cuba were pro-Cuban. The mixed newspapers were for 26.8 percent in favor of the Cubans and the yellow newspapers wrote for 38.5 percent pro-Cuban stories. So, for the American people there was no way around the Cuban insurrection. Almost every newspaper wrote about it and much of these stories were in favor of the Cuban cause. This caused the creation of a general awareness of the violent conflict in Cuba and the establishment of pro-intervention sentiment. Because the American people were overwhelmed with stories about Spanish wrongdoings, the idea of the United States ending such misdemeanor became increasingly appealing to the American public.

¹⁵⁸ John Maxwell Hamilton et al., “An Enabling Environment: A Reconsideration of the Press and the Spanish-American War,” *Journalism Studies*, August 19, 2006, 78, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700500450368>.

¹⁵⁹ Hamilton et al., 88.

¹⁶⁰ Hamilton et al., 88.

Table 4.1: *Frequencies and average per day of stories about Cuba, percentages of pro-Cuba valence and pro-Spain valence stories*

Newspaper	Total no. of stories	Average no. of stories per day	Pro-Cuba (%)	Pro-Spain (%)
Conservative			14.7	6.0
Washington Post	112	8.0		
Los Angeles Times	131	9.4		
Seattle Post-Intelligencer	102	8.6		
New York Times	89	6.4		
Mixed			26.8	5.0
Atlanta Constitution	88	6.2		
St. Louis Post-Dispatch	48	3.5		
Chicago Tribune	88	6.3		
Yellow			38.5	6.2
Denver Post	47	3.4		
New York World	21	1.5		
New York Journal	63	4.5		

Source: John Maxwell Hamilton, Renita Coleman, Bettye Grable & Jaci Cole, "An Enabling Environment: A reconsideration of the press and the Spanish-American War," *Journalism Studies* (August 2006): 86.

4.4. Anti-war and anti-imperialism

Although the publications of much of the American press throughout the final years of the 1890s might not suggest it, there were anti-war sentiments in the United States. Especially business sentiment expressed, at the end of 1897 and in the beginning of 1898, its anti-intervention arguments. Whenever the day's news mentioned the possibility of American involvement in the Cuban conflict, Wall Street stocks turned downward. Wall Street stocks climbed again when the day's news presented information on a peaceful diplomatic outcome.¹⁶¹ An example of anti-war sentiments of the editors of financial and business journals is the article of the *Commercial and Financial Chronicle* of April 2, 1898. The author of the article "Congress, the President and the War Sentiment" praises President McKinley's "firmness, good judgement and tact" as they have been "the nation's one protection".¹⁶² As "it becomes (...) the fashion to approve of war", the author declares that "the proposition to settle this series of events by the indiscriminate slaughter of the armies and navies of two nations, so long as the slightest possibility remains of achieving an honorable end through peaceful and dignified diplomacy, appears to us so monstrous that we regard its open advocacy at this time in the Congress of the United States as a stain on our country's good name which nothing but the complete repudiation of these influences of recklessness and mischief can wipe out".¹⁶³ Although the author does not mention financial motives to refrain from intervention, his anti-war sentiments are evident throughout the entire article. The author speaks of public opinion on the matter as being "swayed by orators and writers who never saw the smoke of battle and would be perfectly safe from seeing it even in the event of a Cuban war".¹⁶⁴ The author thereby acknowledges the general public sentiment being in favor of war and places himself and his readers as being above that and not easily persuaded into "international war as an amusement of profitable source of glory".¹⁶⁵

The anti-imperialists were also against the idea of an American intervention in the Spanish-Cuban war. The anti-imperialist movement opposed any imperialist policy as they believed it to be against the political doctrines of, among others, the Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. These doctrines stated that a government could only rule a people by their consent, and that the United States should refrain from imitating the methods of the nations of the Old World in any way.¹⁶⁶ While there is little evidence of anti-imperialism activism in the years prior to the Spanish-American War, the Anti-Imperialist League started to take form during the aftermath of the war with Spain. In September

¹⁶¹ Julius W. Pratt, "American Business and the Spanish-American War," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 14 (May 1934): 164.

¹⁶² "Congress, the President and the War Sentiment," *Commercial and Financial Chronicle*, April 2, 1898, Vol. 66, No. 1710 edition, 639.

¹⁶³ "Congress, the President and the War Sentiment," 639–41.

¹⁶⁴ "Congress, the President and the War Sentiment," 640.

¹⁶⁵ "Congress, the President and the War Sentiment," 640.

¹⁶⁶ Fred H. Harrington, "The Anti-Imperialist Movement in the United States, 1898-1900," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 22, no. 2 (September 1935): 211.

1898, one month after cease fire, an important representative of the anti-imperialist movement, Carl Schurz, wrote to Björnstjerne Björnson: “I believe that this democracy, the government of, by, and for the people, is not fitted for a colonial policy, which means conquest by force, or as President McKinley called it, “criminal aggression” and arbitrary rule over subject populations.”¹⁶⁷ Schurz hereby declares the possible annexation of Cuba to be equal to a colonial policy and rule over another people. Although Schurz does not specifically mention ‘empire’, it can be assumed that by annexing territories such as Cuba, the United States would have acquired an empire by ruling over another people. Despite all efforts, the actual results of the anti-imperialists were few. They did have some influence on the behavior of the American government regarding the Philippines and perhaps have secured the enactment of the Jones Act of 1916.¹⁶⁸ However, in regard to the Spanish American War and the annexation of Cuba, they did not prevent their government from imitating the methods of the ‘Old World nations’.

4.5. Hawaii

An important imperialistic incentive of the United States to engage in the war with Spain was the annexation of Hawaii. While traditionally the United States had defended the independence of the Hawaiian kingdom, this changed over the course of the 1890s. The departure of their previous policy was encouraged by two developments: the increasing flood of immigrants coming from the Orient to supply for the lack of laborers, and the aggressive and expanding policy of Japan who was looking for new territories to conquer. If Hawaiian independence was destroyed by a European or oriental power, the United States would suffer strategic and economic consequences.¹⁶⁹ The United States was invested in the Hawaiian economy due to its investments in the sugar industry. Because the whaling industry of Hawaii had declined in the 1850s, an American firm had introduced the Hawaiians to the sugar industry as a new source of income. American residents on the island and new American immigrants furnished the capital and developed a favorable political climate for fast growth of this industry.¹⁷⁰ This growth continued until the 1890s. Between 1875 and 1890, United States capital investments in the Hawaiian sugar estates and refineries increased from around \$1.5 million out of a total of \$2 million to \$24,735,610 out of \$33,455,990. So, the United States was responsible for almost 74 per cent of capital investments in the Hawaiian sugar industry some eight years prior to the annexation of the island.¹⁷¹

Moreover, the United States and Hawaii signed a Reciprocity Treaty in 1875 which was a free-trade agreement that guaranteed that Hawaiian sugar had a duty-free market in the United States. The treaty was most beneficial to the United States as it exchanged this duty-free market for special economic

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Harrington, 212.

¹⁶⁸ Harrington, 229.

¹⁶⁹ John C. Appel, “American Labor and the Annexation of Hawaii: A Study in the Logic and Economic Interest,” *Pacific Historical Review* 23, no. 1 (February 1954): 3.

¹⁷⁰ David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Involvement: American Economic Expansion Across the Pacific, 1784-1900* (University of Missouri Press, 2001), 46.

¹⁷¹ Pletcher, 58.

privileges for Americans on the island. Due to foreign trade and earnings and dividends from different insurance, manufacturing and commercial companies on the island, the treaty was rather profitable for the United States. Lorrin A. Thurston, a Hawaiian-American lawyer, businessman and politician, summarized American control over the island as the United States had “secured an enormous addition to her ship-building and foreign export and carrying trade, and there has been created a prosperous, progressive American community, which is no less American because it is across an ocean and under a tropical sky.”¹⁷²

Why, if according to the American minister at Honolulu the United States “enjoyed every [political] benefit it would have if the Hawaiian Kingdom were a state of the Union”, did the United States want to annex the island prior to the Spanish-American War?¹⁷³ The answer is power politics. If the United States were to acquire overseas territories, they would be able to join the game of empires. By acquiring Hawaii, no European or oriental power would do so and the United States would have established control over a place “under a tropical sky”.

President Cleveland had encountered strong opposition to annexing Hawaii. However, in June 1897, his successor, President McKinley, submitted a new treaty for acquiring Hawaii to the Senate. Unfortunately for the annexationists, the treaty was not able to command the necessary votes.¹⁷⁴ One year later, on the eve of the Spanish-American War, the treaty was still in hands of the Senate. To protect Hawaii and to secure strategic advantages of using the islands in their war strategy, the Hawaiian officials drafted a bill authorizing President McKinley to use Hawaii for these war purposes in Washington. However, this bill was never submitted to the authorities for approval.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, President McKinley still entertained the idea of using Hawaii for war purposes after which its annexation would follow. Henry Cabot Lodge, Senator from Massachusetts, wrote to Theodore Roosevelt, who was then the Assistant Secretary of the Navy: “I do not believe the Senate can hold out very long, for the President has been very firm about it and means to annex the Islands any way. I consider the Hawaiian business as practically settled.”¹⁷⁶ Although it was convenient for the United States, it was not necessary to annex Hawaii for the usefulness of the island for war purposes as Honolulu already provided all possible benefits to the United States. However, on July 7, 1898, the joint resolution for the annexation of Hawaii was signed by President McKinley.¹⁷⁷

The United States wanted to annex Hawaii for political reasons and used the Spanish-American War to do so. By arguing the annexation of Hawaii was necessary for war purposes, President McKinley

¹⁷² Quoted in Pletcher, 58.

¹⁷³ Quoted in Pletcher, 57.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas A. Bailey, “The United States and Hawaii during the Spanish-American War,” *The American Historical Review* 36 (April 1931): 552.

¹⁷⁵ Bailey, 554.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in Thomas A. Bailey, “The United States and Hawaii during the Spanish-American War,” *The American Historical Review* 36 (April 1931): 554.

¹⁷⁷ Bailey, “The United States and Hawaii during the Spanish-American War,” April 1931, 559.

got around the opposition of the annexation treaty his predecessor Cleveland experienced and he acquired, even before winning the war with Spain, a colony for the American empire.

4.6. Conclusion

In his Message to Congress, President McKinley stated his incentives to go to war with Spain over Cuba. Because American commerce was threatened by the insurrection and because the Spaniards were inhumane in their warfare, the United States was obliged to aid the Cubans in their battle for independence. Especially the latter perspective was increasingly represented in American press. Whereas it is generally known that the American yellow press was rather aggressive in its means to sell the story of a heroic Cuba against a monstrous Spain, it was also the 'normal' American press that fueled the fire of the American public. After indicating the enormous stream of information about the Cuban conflict and the biased stories, it seems impossible to establish an anti-war sentiment in the United States in the couple of years prior to the war. Still, there was an anti-imperialism movement that advocated against American involvement in the Spanish-Cuban war. There were also voices within American business that expressed their anti-war sentiments. However, the United States decided to engage in the war with Spain. Besides commercial interests and good-will incentives, American imperialism, starting with the annexation of Hawaii, was a significant motive to wage war with Spain. Chapter 5 shows what happened after the war and how the outcome of the war made the United States into an empire.

Chapter 5: Outcome of the war

On April 25, 1898, by declaring being in a state of war with Spain, the United States encountered “the splendid little war” over Cuba’s independence.¹⁷⁸ The U.S. Navy blockaded Havana and a squadron of the most modern warships of Spain departed from the Cape Verde islands. Cuban and American leaders were negotiating over joint military action and around 5,000 Cuban insurgents joined the U.S. force. After two months of combat, on July 3, the Spanish squadron commanded by Admiral Cervera was destroyed by U.S. warships. The Spanish surrendered on July 17 and a formal treaty was signed on August 12, 1898 thereby ending four hundred years of Spanish government over Cuba. The United States suffered around 5385 soldiers of which 385 actually killed in action; the rest died predominantly of disease.¹⁷⁹ On December 10, 1898, the United States and Spain signed a peace treaty in Paris in which Spain ceded Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico to the United States. By acquiring these overseas territories, the United States is to be considered an imperial might.¹⁸⁰ This chapter asks to what extent the United States got what they wanted and to what extent this corresponds with American imperialism.

On December 5, before signing the Paris Peace Treaty, President McKinley wrote a message to Congress. A few passages are interesting to analyze in relation to American imperialism and the war on Cuba. In the message, McKinley states on the newly acquired territories: “I do not discuss at this time the government or the future of the new possessions which will come to us as the result of the war. (...) In the meantime and until the Congress has legislated otherwise, it will be my duty to continue the military governments which have existed since our occupation and give to the people security in life and property and encouragement under a just and beneficent rule.”¹⁸¹ On governing Cuba he states: “As soon as we are in possession of Cuba and have pacified the Island it will be necessary to give aid and direction to its people to form a government for themselves.”¹⁸² How well-willing its sounds, giving Cuba the time to form their own ‘government’, Cuba was from now on regarded as an American possession. Even if their independence was eventually granted, which turned out to happen four years after the war, it was still of utmost importance to the United States that “our relations with this people shall be of the most friendly character and our commercial relations close and reciprocal.”¹⁸³ Although McKinley emphasizes how the United States has a duty to help “realizing the best aspirations of the Cuban people”, these aspirations do need to be in line with American aspirations.¹⁸⁴ Until Cuba has founded a stable government (one that is

¹⁷⁸ Alejandro de Quesada, *The Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection, 1898-1902* (Osprey Publishing, 2007), 6.

¹⁷⁹ Alejandro de Quesada, *The Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection, 1898-1902* (Osprey Publishing, 2007), 7-8.

¹⁸⁰ de Quesada, 11.

¹⁸¹ President McKinley, “Message of the President Transmitted to Congress, December 5, 1898” (Office of the Historian, 1898), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1898/message-of-the-president>.

¹⁸² President McKinley.

¹⁸³ President McKinley.

¹⁸⁴ President McKinley.

approved of by the United States), American military occupation will disappear. So, the United States had all control and power over the island after the war and thereby acted as a judge over Cuba's future sovereignty.

After the war, not only Cuba's economic base was destroyed but also a significant part of the population was wiped out. The island was ruined and almost all livestock was gone. Only 10 per cent of the cattle was still alive after the war and the sugar plantations were destroyed. The tobacco and coffee industries were in chaos, almost all roads were demolished, including the railroads that had been established during Cuba's economic boom, and there was almost no food available. The scarce food supply was only to be found in the cities causing the Cuban army, that was residing in the countryside, to starve to death. Many Cubans had died during the war and others were still dying of disease and starvation shortly after it.¹⁸⁵

So, Cuba was in ruin and the United States had to figure out what to do with their newly acquired island. The Teller Amendment, which was adopted on April 20, 1898, stated that "the United States hereby disclaims any disposition or intention to exercise sovereignty, jurisdiction, or control over said island [of Cuba] except for the pacification thereof, and asserts its determination, when that is accomplished, to leave the government and control of the island to its people."¹⁸⁶ However, only one year after the adoption of the Amendment, the Americans did not refrain from exercising sovereignty, jurisdiction or control over the island. Different newspapers claimed that the United States were actually sending soldiers to control the island.¹⁸⁷ This idea of control is rather important in regard to American imperialism and empire. After the Spanish-American war, the United States had finally acquired its overseas territories it needed for its empire and had longed for by the end of the nineteenth century. It controlled Cuba both militarily as economically, thereby considering Cuba as being a part of the United States. Following William Doyle's statement on imperialism and the definition of empire, it is important to analyze how and to what extent the United States exercised control over Cuba. Although the Americans considered Cuba to be part of their own territory just shortly after the war, this idea was formalized during the Paris Peace Treaty on December 10, 1898.

5.1. The Paris Peace Treaty

Firstly, the Paris Peace Treaty. On October 1, 1898, the drawing up of the peace treaty between the United States and Spain had begun. The United States had turned out the victor of the short war and could basically get all it wanted from the financially bankrupt Spanish empire. The first negotiations were on the Philippines islands which were easily settled by Spain giving them to the United States. The more

¹⁸⁵ Philip S. Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism*, vol. II: 1898-1902 (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972), 379-81.

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in Foner, II: 1898-1902:388.

¹⁸⁷ Foner, II: 1898-1902:388.

tricky were the negotiations on what to do with Cuba. The Spanish government relinquished all claims of sovereignty or title to Cuba but in return expected the United States, or Cuba itself, to claim sovereignty over the island. This sovereign would then have to pay back the huge debt (around 456 million dollars) of, according to Spain, Cuba to Spain. The United States refused and neither Cuba nor Cuba ever paid this debt to Spain.¹⁸⁸

The negotiations lasted until December 10, 1898, when the draft Treaty was signed and the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Cuba were ceded from Spain to the United States. Article Sixteen summarizes the decision on sovereignty over Cuba: “It is understood that only obligations during the period of her occupation and for the obligations assumed in this treaty by the United States with respect to Cuba are limited to the time of its occupancy thereof; but it will upon the termination of such occupancy, advice the government established in the island to assume the same obligations.”¹⁸⁹ This treaty concludes late-nineteenth century American imperialism: expanding the American empire under the guise of helping Cuba to form its own government.

5.2. American control over Cuba

Secondly, the extent of American control over Cuba. United States controlled the island in two ways: military and economically. American detachments took possession of Cuban towns by late November and early December, 1898. The American troops needed to use little violence as the Cuban rebels cooperated with the occupying troops and the Cuban civilians welcomed the American troops with open arms, eager to aid feeding the hungry and restoring the order.¹⁹⁰ In December 1898, President McKinley sent a large military force to Cuba in order to establish its occupation. Major-General Brooke was, as Military Governor of Cuba, appointed as the direct representative of the President on the island and had 45,000 officers and men under his command.¹⁹¹ Especially in the early years of the occupation, the military command system of the United States was superior to the civil Cuban government and dominated almost all activity on the island. The system consisted of seven departments and each of these departments was commanded by an American general. This general was in charge of all the American troops in the area, had supervision of the public works, charities, jails and sanitarian and exercised authority over municipal and provincial administrations.¹⁹² Many Cubans, eager for paid jobs, thought the quickest road to independence was through cooperation and therefore worked with the military authorities. They used their jobs within the civilian administration to contribute to the establishment of a stable (political)

¹⁸⁸ Foner, II: 1898-1902:407.

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Foner, II: 1898-1902:412.

¹⁹⁰ Graham A. Cosmas, “Securing the Fruits of Victory: The U.S. Army Occupies Cuba, 1898-1899,” *Military Affairs* 38, no. 3 (October 1974): 89.

¹⁹¹ Graham A. Cosmas, “Securing the Fruits of Victory: The U.S. Army Occupies Cuba, 1898-1899,” *Military Affairs* 38, no. 3 (October 1974): 90.

¹⁹² Foner, II: 1898-1902:526.

foundation of the island.¹⁹³ Thus, the American military occupation of the island went smoothly. Delicate planning and coordination between Havana and Washington caused the quick establishment of American control over Cuba, with only disease being the biggest threat to the development of the island.

The United States did not only control the island through military force. It had also already penetrated the island economically, even in the years before the outburst of the war. Prior to the war, American business owned much of Cuba's sugar industry as they had invested in sugar mills and refineries. After the war, the United States pushed this economic control over Cuba to a next level. In 1899, a book was published on the profits for the United States of having overseas territory. The book, *Our Island Empire: A Hand-Book of Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippine Islands* by Charles Morris explains how the United States could benefit commercially from the Spanish-American War.¹⁹⁴ Besides a systematic account of Cuba's political, physical and agricultural conditions, the book states: "To the United States, among the chief advantages of the liberation of Cuba will be a commercial one."¹⁹⁵ The book satisfied a general desire of the United States to inquire about their new acquisitions in the West Indies and the Pacific. The *Journal of Education* argued that "... the book is decidedly helpful in forming a clear idea of our prospects and problems as an imperial nation."¹⁹⁶

The United States was keen to make Cuba a fruitful addition to their income flux. Different business interests flocked out to Cuba to make their influence felt. American products were advertised by the military and many American businessowners set out to Cuba to establish franchises and to make contracts.¹⁹⁷ After 1899, American capitalists economically penetrated the island with huge investments and they gained control over railroads, the sugar industry, fruit production, mining and real estates.¹⁹⁸ A significant example of American control over Cuba's economy is the Cuba Company. The Cuba Company was established in 1900 in order to help Cuba develop by constructing a central railroad line throughout the island and was the largest single foreign investment in Cuba.¹⁹⁹ Through an extensive network of political, economic, ideological, cultural and social contacts, the Cuba Company influenced both the type and rate of Cuban development. The enterprise established relationships and alliances between not only Cuban and United States politicians and businessmen but also their European and Canadian equivalents.²⁰⁰ Both Americans and Cubans were able to manipulate national relations to suit their own agenda. The company set up new policies and relations and influenced Cuba's geographic and

¹⁹³ Foner, II: 1898-1902:526.

¹⁹⁴ Charles Morris, *Our Island Empire: A Hand-Book of Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippine Islands* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1899), <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=loc.ark:/13960/t3708d215&view=1up&seq=6>.

¹⁹⁵ Morris, 164.

¹⁹⁶ "Review of *Our Island Empire. A Handbook of Cuba, Porto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippine Islands* by Charles Morris," *Journal of Education* 49 (June 1, 1899): 347, <https://www-jstor-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/stable/pdf/44060689.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Ae9cbeb80dd9927ab0df8b0d7f71c7393>.

¹⁹⁷ Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism*, II: 1898-1902:467.

¹⁹⁸ Juan C. Santamarina, "The Cuba Company and the Expansion of American Business in Cuba, 1898-1915," *Business History Review* 74 (2000): 75.

¹⁹⁹ Santamarina, 41.

²⁰⁰ Santamarina, 43.

economic proximity to the United States.²⁰¹ Table 5.1. is an example of the special relationship between Cuba and the United States after the war.²⁰²

Table 5.1: *The imports and exports of Cuba including gold and silver, over six months ending in December 31, 1899 in dollars.*

Area	Import	Export
Europe	16.294.789	4.713.929
Asia	127.082	6.071
South America	2.044.781	284.716
West Indies	968.554	86.722
United States	16.843.794	14.025.178

Source: U.S. Division of Insular Affairs, *Monthly Summary of Commerce of the Island of Cuba: July to December, 1899: With Comparative Tables of Imports and Exports, by Articles and Countries* (Forgotten Books, February 2019), 8-9.

Table 5.1. shows that the United States is by far the biggest importer and exporter of Cuban commerce. The European total consists of the total of sixteen different European countries. The United States alone is responsible for 46,2 percent of the total imports of Cuba. Moreover, the United States accounts for 73,3 percent of the total export of Cuba. This indicates the extent to which the economic relationship between the United States and Cuba was special, one year after the Treaty of Paris. After the Spanish-American war, Cuba was highly dependent on the United States for its exports and imports. Its economy was reliant on American business and capital and the commerce between the island and the United States.

As a justification of the United States exercising control over Cuba, the Americans emphasized the importance of a ‘fit’ Cuban government. The United States would ensure this by stepping in as a ‘temporary’ government until this fit government was established. But who was to decide whether Cuba was ‘fit’ enough for self-government? Who was the judge? William R. Day, who was the Secretary of State and at the time in charge of the negotiations with Spain, concluded to McKinley: “It is obvious enough that the administration of Cuba will have to be controlled by, in some shape or form, the United States... In Cuba, the United States will have to grapple with the work of governing a population unfit to rule itself.”²⁰³ So, according to the Americans, Cuba was after the war in no shape or form suitable to govern itself. This caused the United States to justify their control over Cuba and Cuba was from then on, considered a part of the United States.

²⁰¹ Santamarina, 83.

²⁰² In the table, the total of different continents is given. For instance, in the European case, the total consists of the amount of commerce between Cuba and sixteen different European countries.

²⁰³ Quoted in Foner, *The Spanish-Cuban-American War and the Birth of American Imperialism*, II: 1898-1902:396.

5.3. Cuba is only the beginning

In the Message of McKinley to Congress on December 5, 1898, the President expresses his interest in the Orient. “Our position among nations, having a large Pacific coast and a constantly expanding direct trade with the farther Orient, gives us the equitable claim to consideration and friendly treatment in this regard, and it will be my aim to subserve our large interests in that quarter by all means appropriate to the constant policy of our Government.” This passage is representative of a general feeling in America on the expansion of economic markets to the Orient, and especially China. The American Asiatic Association expressed in their issue of June 10, 1899: “Through this Chamber of Commerce I wish to say to the merchants and farmers of the Pacific Coast, to the manufacturers and cotton raisers of the South, to the manufacturers and exporters of the East, North and Central West, and the laboring men of all sections, because it affects the price of their labor, that they should unite for the development and immediate protection of the great markets of Pacific and Oriental lands.”²⁰⁴

Initially, during an era of globalization, the American idea of looking for new markets to sell their surplus does not sound very alarming. However, when looking at the situation of Cuba and the Islands, the initial incentive of American expansionism was economically. When confronted with obstacles to the optimal commercial conditions and the perfect opportunity for involvement in a struggle over power and control over that territory, the United States proved rather imperialistic in its quest for new territories. In his Message to Congress, McKinley even mentions a possible military intervention when American interest is harmed: “As in the case of the attacks upon our citizens in Szechuan and at Kutien in 1895, the United States Minister has been instructed to secure the fullest measure of protection, both local and imperial, for any menaced American interests, and to demand, in case of lawless injury to person or property, instant reparation appropriate to the case. War ships have been stationed at Tientsin for more ready observation of the disorders which have invaded even the Chinese capital, so as to be in a position to act should need arise, while a guard of marines has been sent to Peking to afford the Minister the same measure of authoritative protection as the representatives of other nations have been constrained to employ.”²⁰⁵ After winning the rather ‘short’ war with Spain on Cuba, the United States was able to acquire new territories by negotiating a peace treaty with Spain in which Spain ceded its territories to the United States. By exercising sovereignty and control over these territories, the United States turned into an empire with overseas colonies. After the sweet taste of victory and the accompanied overseas ‘prizes’, the United States wanted more. It had now set its eyes on the rest of the Pacific and the Orient.

²⁰⁴ John Barrett, “America’s Interest in the Far East,” *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* 1, no. 6 (June 10, 1899): 49.

²⁰⁵ President McKinley, “Message of the President Transmitted to Congress, December 5, 1898.”

5.4. Neutrality

Having researched the rather aggressive foreign policy of the United States regarding Cuba and Asia, it is rather interesting that the United States chose for a neutral policy during the first three years of the First World War. The strategy of American neutrality consisted of a benevolent attitude regarding the Allied Powers and a strictly technical one toward the Central Powers. The United States were connected to the Allies through political, economic and emotional bonds while there was a lack of mutual interests between Germany and the United States. The eventual inclusion of the U.S. in the First World War in 1917 has everything to do with national political and economic interests.²⁰⁶ Eventually, the participation of the United States into World War I is to be viewed as exercising American imperialism. They were a decisive force of the victorious Allies and they contributed to the redrawing of Europe and its boundaries and the Treaty of Versailles and its transfer of colonial territories.²⁰⁷

5.5. Conclusion

While the United States Military Government controlled Cuba politically, American business relations and direct investment in Cuban development did so economically. By sending large numbers of troops to the island, General Brooke was amply supported in the establishment of American military control over Cuba. Having encountered little Cuban resistance, the United States was able to quickly restore order and control Cuban governance. Alliances between Cuban and American businessmen and the huge sum of American investments in Cuban-American businesses caused the economic penetration of the United States, that had begun already prior to the war, to develop into full economic control over the island. After having tasted fruits of victory, the United States started their quest for foreign markets in, among others, Asia. It is therefore even more interesting that the United States followed its neutrality policy during the First World War. Unfortunately, this thesis had little room left to go into depth about the relationship between American foreign policy at the beginning of the twentieth century and the First World War.

²⁰⁶ Daniel M. Smith, "Robert Lansing and the Formulation of American Neutrality Policies, 1914-1915," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 43 (June 1956): 60.

²⁰⁷ Robert Zevin, "An Interpretation of American Imperialism," *The Journal of Economic History* 32 (March 1972): 332.

Conclusion

American imperialism was of significant importance in the decision of the United States to enter a war with Spain in 1898. During the nineteenth century, the world was transforming. Innovations in communication and transportation caused a global interconnectedness. The emergence of a modern international society caused nations to increase their power and capabilities. The vigorous rivalry among the imperialist states who were seeking spheres of influence caused the United States to feel an urgency to participate in the great-power game. The United States had been expanding economically and American citizens became increasingly national conscious. The demand for an American empire became generally popular and the United States started looking outward. The Spanish-American war was the excellent opportunity for the United States to acquire a new sphere of influence and to throw an old empire of its thrown. So, on April 11, 1898, the United States encountered a brief war with Spain over the island of Cuba. After having won the war, the United States had established what it had longed for during the second half of the nineteenth century, overseas territories. These overseas territories were of crucial importance to the establishment of the American empire.

Regarding the definition of William Doyle on empire and imperialism, the United States checks all the boxes at the end of the nineteenth century by using the Spanish-American war to establish this empire. Firstly, the existence of control over another political sovereignty. The United States established both economic and military control right after Spain left the island. McKinley had sent many troops to establish military control on the island, and different establishments of American-Cuban businesses caused Cuba to be economically dependent on the United States. Secondly, the reason why the United States wanted to be in control. There are two motives to be indicated in why the United States was interested in gaining control over the island: the idea of expansionism being the solution to economic downturn as a result of overproduction and to acquire overseas territories to be able to join the game of empires that was going between the Great Powers in Europe. Although emerging as one of the biggest industrial nations, the United States lacked colonies to prove its importance in the international hierarchy. These political and economic incentives are connected to American imperialism and the expansion of the American empire. The third indication of imperialism is the reason why the other party failed to resist this control. In the couple of years prior to the war, the United States had already established a special relationship with Cuba. The United States was the main importer of Cuban commerce and Cuba's sugar industry was already taken over by American businesses. The economic penetration of Cuba's main industry, sugar, caused the United States to already have some control over the island prior to the war. Due to the Tariff Act of 1894, Cuba's economic boom that was made possible by American investments collapsed and the island was poor and unemployed.

The three factors of imperialism as described by William Doyle, are evident in the relationship between Cuba and the United States. This thesis however offers a fourth element of imperialism: the

replacement of the old control. As Cuba was a colony of Spain, it was under the Spain's control. The insurrection of Cuba against its colonizer, and thereby the fight of Cuba against the old control, was a perfect opportunity for the United States to step in and take over this control. So, while the United States created a narrative in which they were only to 'aid' the Cubans in their battle against oppression and to guard their own business interests on the island, the real motive of the United States to involve themselves in the Spanish-American war was to replace the old order on Cuba and establish a new government there under American control.

This thesis has investigated to what extent American imperialism was an incentive to go to war with Spain over the island of Cuba. Whereas it has generally been thought that American imperialism was a result of the Spanish-American war, this thesis has provided evidence that American imperialism was the incentive of the war. Each of the chapters contributed to the analysis to what extent the United States' foreign policy in regard to the Spanish-American war is to be regarded as American imperialism. The three factors of imperialism, all related to control, are discussed in the chapters. While the chapters are divided by chronology, they are united in their approach to the establishment of American control over the island of Cuba. Chapter 2 establishes a definition of imperialism and control, chapter 3 and 4 discuss the reasons of the United States to exercise control and, lastly, chapter 5 discusses the existence of this control. All of the chapters give different aspects of why Cuba failed to resist this American control.

However, there are still plenty areas in need of thorough research in regarding American imperialism. The Paris Peace Treaty not only ascribed Cuba to the United States, it also ceded the Philippines and Puerto Rico to the United States. As there was also a violent conflict going on in the Philippines, it is interesting to investigate a similar analysis of the establishment of United States' control in the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Furthermore, this thesis did not go into depth into the idea of anti-imperialism and the voices within the United States against the Spanish-American war and the United States' foreign policy in general. An analysis into these subjects would be interesting as well.

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Appendices

Appendix A: *American newspaper on the Cuban-American Fair at Madison Square Garden, May 26, 1896*



Source: "A Scene in Madison Square Last Night at the Cuban Fair." *The Journal* (New York, May 26, 1896), 2.

\$50,000 REWARD.—WHO DESTROYED THE MAINE?—\$50,000 REWARD.

EDITION FOR GREATER NEW YORK
NEW YORK JOURNAL
AND ADVERTISER.

NO. 11,771. NEW YORK, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1896.—10 PAGES. PRICE ONE CENT

\$50,000!

\$50,000 REWARD!
For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!

The New York Journal hereby offers a reward of \$50,000 for information furnished to it exclusively, that will enable the person or persons who sank the Maine.

Assistant Secretary Roosevelt
Convinced the Explosion of
the War Ship Was Not
an Accident.

The Journal Offers \$50,000 Reward for the
Conviction of the Criminals Who Sent
258 American Sailors to Their Death.
Naval Officers Unanimous That
the Ship Was Destroyed
on Purpose.

\$50,000!

\$50,000 REWARD!
For the Detection of the Perpetrator of the Maine Outrage!

The New York Journal hereby offers a reward of \$50,000 for information furnished to it exclusively, that will enable the person or persons who sank the Maine.



NAVAL OFFICERS THINK THE MAINE WAS DESTROYED BY A SPANISH MINE.

George Estlin Brown, the Journal's special correspondent at Havana, calls this is the most serious of many disclosures in the Cuban capital that the Maine was destroyed and 258 of her crew killed by cause of a submerged mine or other Spanish device. This is the outcome of a series of disclosures. The Spaniards, it is believed, arranged to have the Maine anchored over one of the harbor mines. It was considered that mine with a hidden mine or a sunken torpedo believed to have been the weapon used against the American man-of-war—Officers and men tell thrilling stories of being blown into the air amid a mass of shattered steel and exploding shells—Survivors brought to Key West scout the idea of accident—Spanish officials protest too much—Our cabinet orders a searching inquiry—Journal sends divers to Havana to report upon the condition of the wreck.

Source: "Who Destroyed the Maine?" The *New York Journal*, (New York, February 17, 1896).