

All for the *Maine*?: The American Motives for Declaring War on Spain in 1898

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ABSTRAKT

Úlohou této bakalářské práce je objasnit motivy Spojených států k vyhlášení války Španělsku roku 1898 a současně prokázat, že výbuch válečné lodi USS *Maine* nebyl jediným, či hlavní motivem. Autor se snaží prokázat, že důvody k vyhlášení války Spojenými státy byly mnohočetné a skládaly se jak z ideologických, tak zejména z ekonomických motivů.

Klíčová slova: Španělsko-Americká válka, Monroeova doktrína, Zjevné předurčení, Žlutá žurnalistika, Stříbrná panika, USS *Maine*, Providentialismus, Teorie hranic, Florida, Karibské moře

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to clarify the American motives for declaration of war on Spain in 1898 and to prove that the explosion of the USS *Maine* was not the sole or principal reason. The author is trying to prove that the U.S. motives to declare war on Spain were multiple, consisting both of ideological and especially of economic motives.

Keywords: Spanish-American War, Monroe Doctrine, Manifest destiny, Yellow Journalism, Panic of 1893, USS *Maine*, Providentialism, Frontier Thesis, Florida, Caribbean Sea

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INTRODUCTION

There were more American soldiers killed by mosquitoes than by Spanish soldiers in the Spanish-American War. Approximately three thousands of Americans died during the Spanish-American War. Only about three hundreds of them were killed by Spanish soldiers. Although diseases like yellow fever, transmitted by mosquitoes, killed thousands of Americans, after all, together with casualties caused by Spanish, American loses were very low. Spanish unpreparedness and bad colonial policy eased American economic and ideological aims. Moreover with casualties of only three thousands of men the United States gained a great world's prestige. "The splendid little war"¹ as the U.S. ambassador to Britain, John Hay, put it, established the United States as an imperial power as Britain was. The United States not only gained new economically and strategically important territories but also strengthened its self-confidence as a defender of democracy and liberty.²

Even though the USS *Maine* explosion in Havana harbor in 1898 convinced the United States to declare war on Spain, it was only the last straw that broke the camel's back. Motives and reasons of the United States to declared war on Spain in 1898 were multiple and originated in different periods of the U.S. history, including pre-revolutionary times. A mixture of ideological and economic motives set a stage for the war. Although the economic motives were the most essential, the role of non-economic motives should not be underestimated. Economic motives that appeared in the last decades of the nineteenth century were based on and supported by ideological motives that shaped the American character. As result, economic motives without ideological ones would not be able to convince the United States to enter the war in 1898.

Following chapters reveal the American motives for declaring war on Spain in 1898. As there were multiple motives, the thesis points out relations of those motives and reasons that in the final countdown led to the war against Spain. Furthermore, it points out even

¹ Spencer Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 621.

² Jennie Cohen, "6 Things You May Not Know About the Spanish-American War," *History*, April 24, 2012, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://www.history.com/news/6-things-you-may-not-know-about-the-spanish-american-war>; Patrick McSherry, "Casualties During the Spanish American War," *The Spanish American War Centennial Website*, April 8, 2014, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://www.spanamwar.com/casualties.htm>.

smallest upheavals between the United States and Spain, which when accumulated, contributed to the conflict itself.

1 THE ACQUISITION OF FLORIDA

To understand the reason why the United States declared war on Spain in 1898, it is necessary to place U.S.-Spanish relations in historical perspective. Many of the reasons for the U.S. declaring war on Spain originate earlier in the nineteenth century.

The Spanish-American war was not the first conflict between these two nations. One of the early clashes appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century. Even though the U.S. legally abolished slavery in 1865, many northern states, for reasons both moral and economic outlawed it earlier. The South, on the other hand, entertained no such moral compunctions and relied on black chattel slavery as the foundation of its economic model. Especially with the development of large cotton plantations in states like Georgia and Alabama, the need for slaves increased. Unfortunately for Southern slave-owners, Spanish East and West Florida provided slaves with an avenue to freedom. Florida was home to Indians who harbored runaways and to Spanish officials who did not respect American property rights. Moreover, Americans were still angry with the Florida Indians for allying with the British during the War of 1812. Together with the fact that Florida was a valuable piece of land both from agricultural and strategic points of view, it is understandable why the United States decided to take military action in Florida.³

In 1817, U.S. Secretary of War John C. Calhoun ordered General Andrew Jackson to secure the border with Spanish Florida and subdue the Indians. In the course of events in 1818, the general abused his power, but the U.S. Congress decided not to punish him. Moreover, Spain, angered, temporarily broke off diplomatic relations with the United States.⁴

Although Florida was officially Spanish, Americans increasingly migrated into the territory to take advantage of its prime agricultural lands. Spain, unable to stop American encroachment, and struggling financially due to the Napoleonic Wars, decided to sell East and West Florida to the U.S., a deal brokered in 1819 but not finalized until 1821.

³ Douglas Harper, "Introduction", *Slavery in the North* (February 4, 2013), <http://www.slavenorth.com/index.html>; Liz Sonneborn, *The Acquisition of Florida: America's Twenty-seventh State* (New York: Chelsea House, 2009), 6, 11.

⁴ Sonneborn, *The Acquisition of Florida*, 3.

America's increasing strength, combined with Spain's increasing weakness, predicated future political developments in the Western Hemisphere.⁵

⁵ Sonneborn, *The Acquisition of Florida*, 25; Ralph Blotdgett, "Adams-Onís Treaty", *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History & Culture*, accessed February 11, 2013, <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia/entries/A/AD004.html>.

2 PROVIDENTIALISM

Although some motives for the war of 1898 were economic, the war was also to a certain extent caused by religious motives, stemming from the ideological concept of American providentialism. Isolation instilled in Americans' the self-perception that they were guardians of a new enlightened Christian society, which helped shape U.S. foreign policy.

2.1 City upon a Hill and Religion after 1783

When the Puritans migrated to the New World, they took with them a belief in their supremacy. The 1630 sermon of Puritan leader John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" set the stage for the role of the United States in the world. Stating that the Puritan New World settlement would be as a "City upon a Hill", Winthrop identified the Puritans as God's chosen people, tasked with setting an example that others might follow.⁶

Afterwards, Americans adopted religious beliefs that affected their foreign policy. American Protestant millennialism, based on the idea that America is supposed to become the Kingdom of God on Earth for a thousand years, transformed into civil millennialism after 1776. The switch changed the perception of the millennium from strictly a religious event to a combination of "religious and civil liberty"⁷ with emphasis on American nationalism and exceptionalism. As a result, the original clash of American Protestantism and European Catholicism with Anglicanism, transformed into a conflict of democratic order and liberty, both civil and religious, "against the opposition of the Old World tyranny,"⁸ represented by European monarchies.⁹

⁶ John David Wilsey, "America as the City Upon a Hill: An Historical, Philosophical, and Theological Critique of the Historiographical Construal of America as a Christian Nation" (Ph.D. diss., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2009), 70, accessed January 21, 2014, http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1103&context=fac_dis.

⁷ John B. Judis, "The Chosen Nation: The Influence of Religion on U.S. Foreign Policy", March 15, 2005, Policy Brief, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2005/03/15/chosen-nation-influence-of-religion-on-u.s.-foreign-policy/1xn5>.

⁸ Judis, "The Chosen Nation".

⁹ Judis, "The Chosen Nation"; John Olinger, review of *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy*, by Andrew Preston, *National Catholic Reporter*, June 15, 2012, 1, accessed April 9, 2014, <http://ncronline.org/books/2012/09/religion-embedded-us-foreign-policy>.

2.2 Providentialism in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

Even though the clash between the United States and Europe remained, as Americans saw it, a fight of good vs. evil, the way Americans tried to achieve the vision of the transformation of the world differed through time. Between 1783 and 1890, Americans found the best way to change the world was to lead by example. This was the case of the City upon a Hill and the Monroe Doctrine. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the approach changed. Americans tried to spread Anglo-Saxon civilization through the world by interventionist policy and imperial aims. Liberating Spain's colonies, and taking possession of some of them, represented a chance to civilize and Christianize their inhabitants, a view expressed by a contemporary Christian publication, which stated that "this war is the Kingdom of God coming."¹⁰ Imperialism in the case of Philippines and Cuba proved to be unsuccessful due to the resistance of these islands' residents, although Americans truly believed they would be welcomed with open arms.¹¹

The fact that the United States went to war against Spain reflects its apocalyptic approach to threats it faced during its history. The United States viewed the conflict in absolute terms, as a fight of good against evil. The clashes were supposed to be the last, establishing the "triumph of civilization and a new world order." As with past wars, the United States preferred an immediate rather than gradual transformation. In the case of Spain in 1898, the Americans could have waited to see if Cubans could gain their independence on their own, but they chose the way of immediate transformation via war.¹²

¹⁰ Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith*, 607, Kindle edition.

¹¹ Judis, "The Chosen Nation."

¹² Ibid.

3 MANIFEST DESTINY

To a certain extent, the Spanish-American War was a result of the ideological concept of Manifest Destiny. Although officially stated in 1845, by journalist John O'Sullivan, belief in white supremacy and the responsibility of spreading civilization throughout the American continent had its roots centuries earlier in Europe.¹³

3.1 Connection to Albion and Manifest Destiny after 1783

As descendants of the British, the belief in white, Anglo-Saxon supremacy was connected to Albion. Despite Britain being multicultural, by the fifteenth century the term Anglo-Saxon came to describe inhabitants of England and afterwards people of the British Isles who spoke English. This so called Anglo-Saxon myth traveled with the British colonists to North America, even though later on, the American Revolutionary War severed it from its British origins.¹⁴

The Independence gained by the Treaty of Paris in 1783 served as evidence to most Americans that it was the destiny of the newly formed republic to spread across North America, a view echoed by many of the U.S. founding fathers. Moreover, the United States was meant to spread democracy across North America, which was one of the reasons for U.S. expansionism. As one of the very few democratic systems all over the world, imperial monarchies like Britain and Spain represented a sincere threat to American security and ideology. As result, the United States determined to meet this threat by establishing a sphere of influence in North America. As the U.S. never truly trusted colonial powers, Americans were ready to undertake any steps necessary to make those powers leave North America. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the purchase of Florida from Spain in 1821 serve as examples of the American desire to own the continent as well as the War of 1812, the attempt of the U.S. to push British out of the North America.¹⁵

¹³ David J. Voelker, "John O'Sullivan Coins the Phrase "Manifest Destiny" 1845" Updated 18 July, 2004, History Tools, http://www.historytools.org/sources/manifest_destiny.pdf, accessed March 29, 2013.

¹⁴ Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4.

¹⁵ Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism.*, p. 86.; Shane Mountjoy, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion*. (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2009), 28.

As Spain seemed to be the weakest opponent in North America and France lacked the ability to take care of its Louisiana Territory because of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe, territory was purchased with relative ease.¹⁶

3.2 Racism and the Mexican-American War

American expansionism also had its dark side. A mixture of ideological concepts such as the Anglo-Saxon myth, City upon a Hill and later on Manifest Destiny led to animosity against non-white people. This disparagement of non-white found support from scientists. In his biased “Crania Americana”, published in 1839, Samuel Morton argued that non-whites had inferior brain size and were not as intelligent as whites and were therefore not equal to white Americans. Southern desire for western agricultural lands, combined with scientific racism led to expansion. Such a non-benevolence against non-white people decades later reflected in the Philippine-American War.¹⁷

Even though Manifest Destiny vision was not new to American society, O’Sullivan’s article strengthened the U.S. expansionist policy. In 1845, Manifest Destiny resulted in the Mexican-American War. As result of Spain’s inability to manage its colonies throughout the nineteenth century, Mexico gained its independence and Spain lost another perspective North American territory. Regardless the political situation in Texas, after 1821 many Americans migrated to Texas as a result of low, land purchase, value, resulting in disagreements about slavery and Mexican-American War of 1846. Summing up, the United States won the war and gained the new territory of Texas as well as California in another conflict with Mexico in the same period of time. These territory gains were essential in the forming of the U.S. future decades. Westward expansion kept Americans busy in terms of civilizing the North America and kept the U.S. economy stable. After the Frontier disappeared, Americans switched their attention abroad.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid, 22, 24.

¹⁷ Horseman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 56.; Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and Philippines*. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 89.

¹⁸ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 323; Shane Mountjoy, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion*, Milestones in American History (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2009), 60-61.

3.3 Manifest Destiny after the Civil War

Even though a domestic issue, consequences of the Civil War reflected in the international matters of the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century, peaking up in the Spanish-American War. Defeating Confederate rebels strengthened the world's position of the United States and its democratic ideology. Abolishing slavery was defended against pro-slavery supporters, gradually putting a pressure on foreign powers to follow its steps in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Dealing with motives for the Spanish-American War, upheaval in form of Cuban revolutions, throughout years between 1868 and 1898, which is one of the reasons the U.S. went into the war, was to a certain extent provoked by the American example.¹⁹

The ideological concept of Manifest Destiny awoke again in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The only difference was in fact that Americans used Manifest Destiny to excuse expansion not on the continent, but overseas. Affected also by social Darwinism and social determinism, the United States felt responsibility to civilize Spanish colonies and spread Anglo-Saxon culture. Many Americans supported idea of the United States as an imperial, world, superpower profiting from its colonies. In 1898, Spanish territories like Cuba, Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam, represented the possible future United States' colonies and the Spanish-American War mean of seizing them. The idea of civilizing inferior races, reflected in 1899s poem by Rudyard Kipling named "The White Man's Burden."²⁰ In the poem, Rudyard Kipling pushes the United States to civilize the inferior races like Filipinos.²¹

¹⁹ Office of the Historian, "The Consequences of Union Victory, 1865," Office of the Historian, accessed January 10, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1861-1865/victory>.

²⁰ Spencer Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 368.

²¹ Spencer Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, 368-9; Shane Mountjoy, *Manifest Destiny: Westward Expansion*, Milestones in American History (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2009), 20.

4 THE MONROE DOCTRINE

In 1823, President James Monroe altered U.S. foreign policy declaring that “the American continents... are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers”.²² The purpose of the message was to warn all European powers against interfering within what Monroe deemed to be the American sphere of influence, encompassing the entire Western Hemisphere. Moreover, Monroe stated that any intervention would be considered an act endangering the safety of the United States, and would result in a military response. On the other hand, Monroe relinquished any American claims on Europe. Monroe also noted the economic and strategic importance of Cuba to the U.S. by stating that the U.S. had and would continue to protect its interests there. In making such assertions, the U.S. was announcing its arrival on the world stage.²³

4.1 Spanish Threat and Independent Latin Nations

During the early decades of the nineteenth century, Spain had lost most of its American colonies in wars of independence, often supported by American filibusterers. Since the colonies provided transportable wealth and strategic positions in terms of trading routes, Spain, was un-likely to give up its claims to its remaining colonies, including Cuba and Puerto Rico. For this reason, Spain remained a threat to the United States.²⁴

Newly formed nations of the American continents presented less danger for the United States than older, European colonies. As result of Spanish neglect, those new nations often lacked adequate military power as well as political influence over the Americas, which is the reason why the United States was more willing to work with them. Although stating that the U.S. would not interfere with new Latin nations, Americans saw a big opportunity in extending their influence southward. From an economic viewpoint, without Spanish supervision over the colonies, the U.S. was able to freely trade with newly formed republics. Another purpose of the Monroe Doctrine was to establish supremacy of

²² Edward J. Renehan, Jr., *The Monroe Doctrine: The Cornerstone of American Foreign Policy*, Milestones in American History (New York: Chelsea House, 2007), 6.

²³ Ibid, 6. 8.

²⁴ Ibid, 64.

democratic systems over existing monarchies. Shared political systems would ease foreign relations and support international trade.²⁵

4.2 Shift in the Meaning of the Monroe Doctrine

Although the Monroe Doctrine originally set an isolationist foreign policy towards European powers as well as Latin American nations, with upcoming decades some U.S. presidents abused the doctrine in order to vindicate U.S. actions in the Western hemisphere. That was the case of the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898. The Cuban War of Independence presented a chance for the United States to push Spain out of the hemisphere once and for all. The Monroe Doctrine served as an argument for invading Cuba from moral, political and economic perspectives. In 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt presented a corollary to the doctrine that reflected the American will to interfere with Cuba. Comparing the original Monroe Doctrine with the U.S. foreign policy of the second half of the nineteenth century points out the irony of how the United States, opposing the European nation's intervention in Latin countries, used interventionist policy in 1898 as well. On the other hand, recognition of a Cuban belligerency by the United States on February 28, 1896, fulfilled the condition of the original doctrine in order to enter the war with Spain as Spain threatened, now recognized, Cubans.²⁶

²⁵ Michael Burgan, *Monroe Doctrine (We the People Expansion and Reform)* (Minneapolis: Compass Point Books, 2007), 10-11; Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth Century America*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), 217.; Gregory Jason Bell, "History of the USA: The Monroe Doctrine," course lecture, Tomas Bata University, Zlín, April, 2013.

²⁶ Renshan Jr. *The Monroe Doctrine*, 91.; Office of the Historian, "Monroe Doctrine, 1823" Milestones: 1821-1829, accessed March 11, 2013, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1801-1829/Monroe>.; George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 218.; Advameg, "Doctrines – The Monroe Doctrine", Encyclopedia of the New American Nation, accessed January 14, 2014, <http://www.americanforeignrelations.com/A-D/Doctrines-The-monroe-doctrine.html>; Jay Sexton, *The Monroe Doctrine: Empire and Nation in Nineteenth Century America*, 231.; Library of Congress, "The World of 1898: The Spanish-American War," Library of Congress, June 22, 2011, accessed January 16, 2014, <http://www.loc.gov/rr/hispanic/1898/chronology.html>.

5 THE BLACK WARRIOR AFFAIR AND THE OSTEND MANIFESTO

As events leading to the Spanish-American War were many and varied, one of them might be found in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1854, the American trade steamer *Black Warrior*, sailing between Mobile and New York with a stop in Havana, was seized by Spanish authorities in Cuba. The reason for the seizure was a false cargo manifest. This event caused an upheaval between the United States and Spain and resulted in the Ostend Manifesto which, when revealed, worsened Spanish-American relations in the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁷

The *Black Warrior* seizure convinced many Americans of the necessity of annexing Cuba to the United States. Especially the southern Democrats, supporting slavery, wanted to make a profit off of slavery in Cuba, both financial and political, as Cuba would become another pro-slavery state. In order to buy Cuba, pro-slavery President Franklin Pierce instructed the American minister to Spain, Pierre Soulé, to negotiate the purchase. Communicating with American ministers to Britain and France, the so-called Ostend Manifesto, a private agreement between the ministers, suggested the taking of the island by force if Spain refused to sell it. Due to Soulé's aggressive approach and inability to negotiate with Spanish officials, the purchase of Cuba was viewed negatively. The situation worsened when the Ostend Manifesto leaked to newspapers. When Spain found out, Spanish-American relations deteriorated. Although the United States did not buy Cuba in 1854, it clearly shows how badly the United States wanted to annex Cuba.²⁸

There were multiple reasons the United States wanted to annex Cuba in 1854, some of which are the reasons the United States went into war against Spain in 1898. One of the reasons was a fear of Cuba becoming a black republic as in the case of Haiti, due to British pressure on Spain to restrict slave trade in Cuba. As a result, American southerners feared that Cuba might inspire black Americans to rebel and harm the U.S. economy and social system. As the Spanish-American War appeared decades after abolition in the United

²⁷ History Engine, "The Black Warrior Affair Exposes U.S. Tensions with Spain," History Engine, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://historyengine.richmond.edu/episodes/view/4235>.

²⁸ Office of the Historian, "Territorial Expansion, Filibustering, and U.S. Interest in Central America and Cuba, 1849–1861," Office of the Historian, March 21, 2014, accessed March 21, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/territorial-expansion>.

States, the picture of Cuba as another slave state had disappeared. On the other hand, for Americans disliking blacks in the United States, Cuba and the Caribbean itself represented a chance of getting rid of black people. The opinion of some Americans in the last decades of the nineteenth century, buttressed by social Darwinism, was that inferior races, including black people in the United States, lower the level of Anglo-Saxon culture. The migration of black people to Caribbean was seen as one of the solutions. Another reason, relating to the Spanish-American war, is to be found in the military and economic security of the United States, as Cuba was strategically important for the whole Caribbean Sea or the Western hemisphere itself.²⁹

²⁹ James W. Cortada, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. v. 70, pt. 4, *Spain and the American Civil War: Relations at Mid-Century, 1855-1868* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1980), 12; Gregory Jason Bell, e-mail to author, March 21, 2014.

6 THE VIRGINIUS AFFAIR

Twenty five years before the Spanish-American War the United States and Spain faced an international clash that almost resulted in an open armed conflict. Although the United States remained neutral during the Cuban Ten Years War, many Americans, responding to “rumors of corrupt and repressive Spanish colonial policies,” became filibusterers. In 1870, the Cuban Junta of New York bought the *Virginius* and used it to transport men and arms to Cuba in support of the revolution. The ship, which sailed under an American flag, soon attracted the attention of Spanish authorities.³⁰

In 1873, the *Virginius* set sail from Jamaica to Cuba, carrying arms and one hundred filibusterers of various nationalities, including Americans. The ship, however, was captured in Jamaican waters and escorted to Santiago de Cuba, where the crew were charged with and convicted of piracy. Fifty-three of them were then executed, including American and British citizens.³¹

Fueled by yellow journalism of the American press, the Spanish action provoked outrage among American civilians and many called for a war against Spain. In addition, some Americans used protest meeting to demand the annexation of Cuba. As time passed, however, Americans learned the truth about the true owners of the *Virginius* and their bellicose aims, and tensions waned. The U.S. Secretary of State helped maintain the peace by resisting military action and negotiating reparations. In truth, though, neither the United States nor Spain could afford a military conflict, as Spain was currently suppressing the Cuban rebellion while the United States was focused on southern Reconstruction and conquering the West. Furthermore, the United States had partly demobilized after the Civil War, while Spain’s navy in the 1870’s was considered to be the one of the most modern and strongest.³²

³⁰ Jonathan Ault, The “Virginius Incident”, *The Spanish American War Centennial Page*, accessed December 20, 2013, <http://www.spanamwar.com/virginius.htm>; Ed Elizondo, The Virginius Incident, Cuban Genealogy Center, accessed December 20, 2013, <http://www.cubagenweb.org/mil/grande/virginius.htm>.

³¹ Ed Elizondo, The Virginius Incident, *The Spanish American War Centennial Page*.

³² Ault, The “Virginius Incident”, *The Spanish American War Centennial Page*; Jerry A. Sierra, “Disputes and Disagreements”, *History of Cuba*, accessed January 4, 2014, <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/matanzas/Virginius-4.htm>; Ault, The “Virginius Incident”, *The Spanish American War Centennial Page*.

Although the *Virginius* Affair did not cause war in 1873, it affected Spanish-American relations for the rest of the nineteenth century. After 1873, American public aversion against Spain kept its steady course up to the Spanish-American War. When the USS *Maine* sank in Havana harbor in 1898, Americans still remembered the *Virginius* Affair. This was the reason why Americans immediately accused the Spanish of terrorism.³³

³³ Iowa State Register, "The *Virginius* Affair," *Sacramento Daily*, April 4, 1898, accessed January 10, 2014, <http://cdnc.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/cdnc?a=d&d=SDU18980404.2.13#>.

7 CUBA AND FLORIDA RELATIONS

As the U.S. economy partly relied on an agricultural production, Americans were familiar with the importance of Florida. Furthermore, Cuba played a similar role within the Spanish empire. But it was Cuba's strategic location that made it so important.

7.1 Economic Situation in Cuba

From the American point of view, Cuba represented both economic opportunity and a threat. Since the early nineteenth century, Spaniards in Cuba started sugar and tobacco plantations. The environment teamed with fertile soil allowed Cuba by the mid-nineteenth century to become the world's largest sugar exporter, providing about one-third of the world's sugar production. The position of Cuba in the middle of Caribbean, just ninety miles from the U.S. coast, bound the two economies together. Especially the Cuban economy had become dependent on the economy of its northern neighbor. Additionally, investments of private American companies started to flow into the Cuban sugar industry by the 1870's and in 1890 the amount of money invested in Cuba reached \$50 million. Soon the majority of Cuban sugar production ended being controlled by American investors.³⁴

Even though trade with Cuba was profitable for the U.S. economy, the same fields of production often caused harm to U.S. farmers or manufacturers. Through the second half of the nineteenth century, the U.S. senate passed restrictions on U.S. imports coming from Cuba. This in turn harmed companies in Cuba. From an economic viewpoint, taking the island appeared to be the best solution.³⁵

Americans dreamt of annexing Cuba since the beginning of the nineteenth century and their desire grew stronger with passing decades. The U.S. made repeated offers to Spain for Cuba, but Spain refused all of them. The political situation in Cuba became increasingly unstable due to three revolts that occurred in the last half of the nineteenth century. The conflicts not only endangered the lives Cubans but, more importantly for the United States,

³⁴ Brad Williford, "The Cuban Revolution of 1895-98", *The Spanish American War Centennial Webpage*, accessed December 12, 2013, <http://www.spanamwar.com/cubanrev.htm>; Lamrani Salim, "U.S. Economic Sanctions against Cuba: Objectives of an Imperialist Policy", *Third World Traveler*, accessed December 12, 2013, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Caribbean/USEconomicSanctions_Cuba.html.

³⁵ Spencer C. Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American War: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 161.

harmed the island's economy and therefore the U.S. economy by association. Cubans fighting on both sides and many of inhabitants imprisoned in concentration camps during the Cuban War of Independence were not able to work on sugar and tobacco plantations, thus limiting production. Shipping companies operating between Florida and Cuba struggled in their business as there were fewer products to be transported. This on one side helped domestic farmers in the United States to sell their sugar with ease but also hurt the American sugar business in Cuba.³⁶

7.2 Florida and its Support of Cuba

The difficult political situation and tariffs set on the manufactured goods of Cuban tobacco industry by the United States forced many Cubans to leave their homeland and search for new job opportunities in nearby Florida. Florida, agricultural like Cuba, offered new jobs for Cuban exiles and throughout the second half of the nineteenth Cubans migrated to Florida for work. Although exiled, Cubans watched the revolutionary attempts in Cuba carefully and financially supported the revolutionary forces in their efforts for takeover. Working in the largest, tobacco manufacturing cities of Tampa and Key West, Cubans were a sizeable and vocal minority in Florida and therefore could to a certain extent influence foreign policy.³⁷

Politicians like Senator Wilkerson Call, Sam Pasco or Florida representative Stephen M. Sparkman, who gained support of many Florida Cubans because of their positive attitude toward rebels and the possible U.S. intervention in Cuba, helped to spread awareness about Cuban issues both among the public and in Congress. Even though protecting the interests of Cuban revolutionary forces would be rational for Senator Wilkerson Call in order to keep Florida Cuban's votes, Call also believed in the revolutionary values and honestly wanted to help Cubans. On the other hand Call was aware of another reason why the United States should take an action in Cuba, the reason Call vehemently presented in the U.S. senate. In 1890's, Spain was in a huge debt to

³⁶ Salim Lamrani, "U.S. Economic Sanctions against Cuba: Objectives of an Imperialist Policy", Third World Traveler, accessed April 9, 2014, http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Caribbean/USEconomicSanctions_Cuba.html.

³⁷ Elliot Robert Barkan ed., *Immigrants in American History: Arrival, Adaptation, and Integration*. 4 vols, (Santa Barbara: ABC- CLIO, 2013), 305; Joe Knetsch and Nick Wynne, *Florida in the Spanish-American War* (Charleston: The History Press, 2011), 53.

German banks, and Call feared that Spain might sell off this debt by selling the island to the banks and feared possible taking of Cuba by Germany. Call also argued with strategic importance of the island and danger it represented under the control of a foreign power as Spain was. According to the Monroe Doctrine such an option was unacceptable for the U.S. government.³⁸

Among Cuban Junta in New York, organization called Cuban League of the United States, founded by New York businessman William O. McDowell in 1892 helped Cuban rebels in their revolutionary attempts on the island. Based purely on moral and democratic motives, Cuban League of the United States represented people from the country, willing to donate money in order to support the revolution. Every American citizen was free to become a member of the organization, many of whom were important public personages. Again, these people spread awareness about the Cuban situation in American institutions like State and War department and even Congress itself. Such actions turned opinion of many American politicians in favor of Cuban rebels. In 1897, organization reached many cities, mainly in eastern part of the country, consisting of approximately one thousand members. The Cuban League of the United States cooperated with Cuban Junta, and supplied rebels with weapons, food and medicaments. The organization helped Cuban revolution to resist, which is a factor that in 1898 led to the Spanish-American War.³⁹

Florida Cubans themselves participated in political sphere of the United States. Between Ten Years War and the Cuban War of Independence, in 1892, the Cuban Revolutionary Party was founded. Thanks to its leader José Martí, Cubans living in Sunshine state were able to effectively raise funds to support revolution by providing arms or financing filibustering expeditions and “many of the cigar workers in Tampa and Key West pledged at least one day’s pay” to support the insurgents who sought support for the upcoming conflict, the Cuban War of Independence.⁴⁰

³⁸ Joe Knetsch and Nick Wynne, *Florida in the Spanish-American War* (Charleston: The History Press, 2011), 61-2.

³⁹ Spencer Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 57.

⁴⁰ Knetsch and Wynne, *Florida in the Spanish-American War*, 55.

8 SOCIAL DARWINISM

In 1859, naturalist Charles Darwin presented his evolutionary theory in which he described the principles of natural selection, the idea that only strong species are supposed to survive. Social Darwinism, which applied Darwin's evolutionary theories to human societies, often with strong racial overtones, influenced social and political events leading to the Spanish American War. The idea of superior and inferior races contributed to the U.S. willingness to enter the war against Spain in 1898.⁴¹

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Social Darwinism gained popularity among many white Americans. Social Darwinists suggested that human races are not equal and divided them into superior and inferior. Superior races like Anglo-Saxon Americans or British reportedly possessed the intelligence and appropriate behavior which inferior races lacked, which gave them the responsibility to lead inferior races. Social Darwinists supported the theory with studies that included intelligence measuring, many of which were strongly biased. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, as the United States endured an economic crisis, some Americans saw an opportunity in educating inferior races. People like Secretary of War, William Howard Taft believed that educating some races could benefit the U.S. market.⁴²

The belief in American racial superiority combined with the selfishness of many Americans convinced them that they were the peak of human civilization and should therefore have the right to decide the fate of smaller, inferior races and nations. This led to American land grabs. For instance, in 1889 the United States took part of Samoa, regardless of the opinions and desires of Samoans. The United States also took Hawaii, regardless of the resistance of many islanders. With these islands in their possession, the United States turned its attention to other archipelagos, such as the Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. As those territories were Spanish possessions, the war of 1898 served as a solution.⁴³

⁴¹ Michael L. Krenn "Spanish-American War" (essay, University of Miami), 1, accessed March 19, 2014, http://www.gale.cengage.com/pdf/whitepapers/gdc/Sp-AmerWar_whtppr.pdf.

⁴² Soula Panagodimos, "Social Darwinism and Racial Motives," *Modern America*, accessed March 19, 2014, <https://wikis.nyu.edu/ek6/modernamerica/index.php/Imperialism/SocialDarwinismAndRacialMotives>; Spencer C. Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 604.

⁴³ Soula Panagodimos, "Social Darwinism and Racial Motives;" Spencer C. Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars*, 605.

Social Darwinism served as an argument both for anti-imperialistic and imperialistic American politicians. Anti-imperialists argued that acquiring territories occupied by non-whites would ultimately degrade the white, Anglo-Saxon race, compromising American superiority. This was the reason why the United States chose not to take Mexico in 1848. On the other hand, imperialists argued that new possessions would open new markets, healing the U.S. economy. Spreading Anglo-Saxon culture around the world would support the U.S. trade and economy. In 1894, the Republicans took control of congress, which helped them to accomplish their plans. Imperialists argued that “American domination and expansion were seen to be natural and inevitable because there were forces of nature at work that were beyond human control.”⁴⁴ Such attitudes set the stage for war in 1898.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Tucker, 605

⁴⁵ Panagodimos; Tucker, 604-605.

9 THE FRONTIER THESIS

At the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, historian Frederick Jackson Turner presented the *Importance of the Frontier in American History* in which he described how the frontier shaped American democratic society and then argued that the frontier no longer existed. The so-called “Frontier Thesis” served as a catalyst for the United States to search for new frontiers overseas. The Spanish-American War provided an opportunity to conquer new territories thereby creating new frontiers and new markets.

Turner emphasized the role of new frontier states in spreading the ideas of democracy and nationalism throughout North America. When the United States became a world power in the second half of the nineteenth century, this strong national consciousness led to imperial tendencies that resulted in the war of 1898.⁴⁶

The basic idea of the Frontier Thesis emphasizes the importance of the frontier in forming the U.S. democracy. Turner argues that face to face wilderness, away from European civilization, American settlers abandoned European way of life in order to survive. As result, Americans living simply in primitive conditions were able to form the American character and a new kind of democratic society that differed from that of European. Turner continues by saying that the frontier shaped American individualism rooted in family that “produced antipathy to control, and particularly to any direct control.”⁴⁷ This reflected in American Revolution, where Americans fought against British control. In addition Turner gives credit to individualism, as a basic stone of American democracy. On the other hand, Frontier Thesis points out that democracy established on the frontier, was strong also in its selfishness. The American selfishness might have reflected in the future U.S. conflicts including the Spanish-American War and Philippine-American War.⁴⁸

9.1 The Difference between American and European Frontier

What Turner explains is the difference between the American and European frontiers. The American frontier lay at the “edge of free land”⁴⁹ without any strong military resistance,

⁴⁶ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” 5-6, accessed February 23, 2014, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/gilded/empire/text1/turner.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”, 6.

⁴⁸ Turner, 2,6.

⁴⁹ Turner, 2.

which enabled Americans to absorb and experience the frontier with all its consequences. On the other hand, Europeans did not face that much of wilderness but rather other countries or civilizations. In the end, the American frontier enabled the creation of a new society whereas the European frontier brought nothing more than new mixtures of pre-existing societies. Turner admits that Europe influenced the way of life of the first settlers but at the same time points out that “too exclusive attention has been paid...to the Germanic origins, too little to American factors.”⁵⁰ In Turner’s view, the frontier reversed Germanic roots and produced a new American product. The east coast of America was the new frontier of Europe but as the frontier advanced and moved west it became American. The cultural and ideological difference between democratic America and monarchical Europe, as caused by frontier conditions, reflected in mutual foreign relations. It was one of the reasons for tensions between the United States and Spain, throughout the nineteenth century, which resulted in the war of 1898.⁵¹

The frontier was important for the U.S. economy. As Turner noted “so long as free land exists, the opportunity for a competency exists, and economic power secures political power.”⁵² In other words the frontier and free land kept Americans busy and the economy growing and developing. The United States with its frontier represented an emerging market, the potential of which had not yet been reached. The frontier’s many attributes led to immigration waves and the production and consumption of products, all of which kept the U.S. economy growing. Yet by 1890, claimed Turner, the frontier was no more. The U.S. economy became mature and its growth slowed. A solution to this problem could be found overseas. As a result, Spanish colonial possession became all the more appealing.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid, 2.

⁵¹ Forrest McDonald “Rugged Individualism: Frederick Jackson Turner and the Frontier Thesis,” World and I School, accessed February 23, 2014, <http://www.worldandischool.com/public/1990/May/school-resource18050.asp>.

⁵² Turner, 6.

⁵³ Gregory Jason Bell, e-mail to author, February 19, 2014; Forrest McDonald “Rugged Individualism”; Texas Digital Library, “Expansionism in the 1890s,” Texas Digital Library, accessed February 23, 2014, http://tdl.org/txlor-dspace/bitstream/handle/2249.3/177/02_expan_1890s.htm?sequence=17.

10 ACCESSING FOREIGN MARKETS

Although the United States became a world power in the late nineteenth century, it lacked sufficient naval forces to protect its economic and military interests. In the 1880's the U.S. navy consisted of outdated ships, dating back to the Civil War. Military scholars spread awareness of the issue and prompted the United States Navy to modernize. This navy proved essential in the Spanish-American War, in which the United States easily defeated the Spanish naval forces.⁵⁴

10.1 The U.S. Navy Modernization

The main reason for the U.S. naval modernization was economic. Following Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis," American intellectuals and politicians, including Alfred Mahan, found it important for the United States, to search for and gain access to foreign markets, thus maintaining economic growth. According to Mahan, the United States was no longer capable of fully consuming its own products. In order to secure trade routes to foreign markets, especially to Asia and the Caribbean, a strong and modern navy was needed. In 1890, Mahan published a book describing how the British Empire was able to become the world power and secure its trade routes with its strong navy. Mahan was convinced that the United States could become such a power if it followed suit. In addition, a strong navy was essential in protecting the Monroe Doctrine's chief tenet that the American sphere of influence stretched throughout the western hemisphere.⁵⁵

10.2 Mahan's Plan of Accessing Foreign Markets

Mahan's plan of accessing foreign markets consisted of three parts. Besides a merchant fleet to carry American goods to market and battleships to protect the trade routes, Mahan emphasized the importance of establishing a network of naval bases providing ships with coal and supplies. Refueling stations were necessary for merchant ships as they were driven by steam and only a thick network of bases could ensure that ships would reach their

⁵⁴ Joe Knetsch and Nick Wynne, *Florida in the Spanish-American War* (Charleston: History Press, 2011),66.

⁵⁵ Office of the Historian, "Mahan's The Influence of Sea Power upon History: Securing International Markets in the 1890s," Office of the Historian, accessed March 4, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/mahan>.

destinations. The rush for refueling stations and access to foreign markets to a certain extent shaped U.S. foreign policy, which in 1898 resulted in the Spanish-American War.⁵⁶

The Spanish-American War represented a possible means of earning territories, many of which were in Spanish possession, strategically important for the trade network. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the United States tried to gain access to foreign markets by buying Alaska in 1867, establishing a coaling station in Samoa in 1878 or taking necessary steps to gain the Hawaiian Islands in 1898, all of which became important refueling stations for the Asian markets. Spanish possessions like Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines that the United States gained after the Spanish-American War, represented an economic and strategic advantage. Together with existing naval bases in places like Florida, the United States created a functional refueling network, which is one of the reasons the United States was willing to go into the war.⁵⁷

10.3 The Importance of Cuba

In the case of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, Cuba was arguably of the greatest importance. Possessing Cuba would to a certain extent enable a regional control of trade, as Havana was an important port. Americans were quite familiar with importance of Cuba and with the threat it posed to their economy and security if under the control of a hostile nation, as Spain more or less was throughout the nineteenth century. For this reason, the United States repeatedly tried to buy Cuba from Spain. When these offers were rejected, military action increasingly became the only solution for the United States. Additionally, a military takeover of the island was already suggested in the so-called Ostend Manifesto of 1854. When in 1895 the revolution in Cuba started again, Americans realized how vulnerable they were against Spanish naval forces and began paying more attention to naval modernization. A modernized navy could protect vulnerable American lands (especially Florida) and look after American socioeconomic interests worldwide.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Spencer C. Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 124; Office of the Historian, "Mahan's The Influence of Sea Power upon History."; Joe Knetsch and Nick Wynne, *Florida in the Spanish-American War*, 69.

The idea of interconnected refueling and naval bases along with navy modernization can be seen as motives for the American declaration of war on Spain in 1898. The fact that many of territories suitable for bases were in Spanish possessions, coupled with the fact that Spain would not sell them, gave the United States impetus to use force to gain them. Events like the Alaska purchase, attempts to buy Cuba, or early proposals for the Panama Canal (which was supposed to create a more direct sea route to Asian markets), demonstrate that the idea of a war on Spain was complex and long-term. In other words, it was not just the explosion of the USS *Maine* that led to war. The United States had strong economic motives for declaring war on Spain.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Gregory Jason Bell, “Dějiny USA: The Monroe Doctrine” lecture, Tomas Bata University, Zlín, April, 2013.

11 THE YELLOW JOURNALISM

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, newspapers held a privileged position among mass media. They shaped public opinion. In New York alone, approximately two million copies were sold daily. In 1895, the struggle for Cuban independence captured the attention of American newspapers. Those supporting the Democratic Party attacked McKinley for his lack of intervention. Although most western newspapers calmly reported on the situation in Cuba, many eastern newspapers tended to be sensationalist.⁶⁰

11.1 Tabloid Techniques of the Yellow Journalism

The peak of so-called yellow journalism took place in the 1890s. The yellow press newspapers, especially the *New York Herald* and *New York World*, competed with exaggerated and sometimes fictional articles (using tabloid techniques such as enormous font size and supplementary pictures) in order to catch the reader's attention, thereby selling more copies.⁶¹

When the revolution in Cuba began in 1895, newspapers, finding it hard to report events on the island, sent journalists to observe the situation. Thanks to these correspondents, the news from Cuba was often accompanied by pictures, in some cases leading the reader to interpret events in prescribed ways. The shocking and often false or exaggerated reports of Spanish brutality against Cuban rebels, civilians imprisoned in concentration camps and the disrespect or even sexual abuse of American citizens in Cuba, as presented via yellow journalism, awakened animosity against Spain among mainly lower class readers the main subscribers. Additionally, such animosity persuaded many Americans about the necessity of U.S. intervention. Many of the reports were strongly biased. Although Cuban rebels often behaved badly, their actions went unreported.⁶²

⁶⁰ Jess Giessel, "Black, White and Yellow," The Spanish American War Centennial Page, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://www.spanamwar.com/press.htm>; David R. Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism: the Press and America's Emergence as a World Power* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 126, 129.

⁶¹ Giessel, "Black, White and Yellow"; Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism*, 126.

⁶² Giessel, "Black, White and Yellow"; Trumbull White, "Our War with Spain for Cuba's Freedom: Weyler's Reconcentration Policy and Its Horrors," Latin American studies, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/1895/weyler-horrors.htm>.

When the USS *Maine* sank in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898, newspapers reported it. Although the cause of the explosion was unclear, journalists immediately blamed Spain. When an investigation determined that the explosion was probably caused by a mine, public opinion was more anti-Spanish than ever, putting pressure on U.S. politicians.⁶³

11.2 American Hispanophobia

Although Yellow Journalism provoked an anti-Spanish mood among the American public, in general it only awoke a deeply rooted American Hispanophobia. The Hispanophobia (aversion to Hispanics) first appeared back in the seventeenth century. Catholic Spain, being the most powerful empire in colonial Americas, represented an eyesore for other competing European nations, especially Protestant England. In 1650, *Tears of the Indians*, a book by Bartolomé de Las Casas, criticizing Spaniards for its brutal treatment of American natives, was published in English. Ever since, Americans perceived Spaniards as barbarous nation, responsible for the death of millions of innocent Indians. In 1898 Spanish officials were commonly pictured as a “pirates or demons surrounded by symbols of gothic horror.”⁶⁴ The distrust against Spaniards shaped American attitude to Hispanic people through history, appearing in previous conflicts with Spain or Mexico, and especially in 1898.⁶⁵

Yellow Journalism certainly took a part in processes leading to the Spanish American War, but its role in it should not be exaggerated. Yellow Journalism itself was not capable of persuading U.S. politicians or even President McKinley to attack Spain. It was only one motive for the Spanish American War. Also the aim of the Yellow Press was to make profit, not to make justice in Cuba.⁶⁶

⁶³ Office of the Historian, “U.S. Diplomacy and Yellow Journalism, 1895–1898,” Office of the Historian, accessed February 2, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/yellow-journalism>.

⁶⁴ Bonnie M. Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest: the Visual and Popular Cultures of the Spanish-American War of 1898* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 2011), 33.

⁶⁵ TID Volumes, “The “Black Legend”: Technically True, But That’s Not the Point...” The Intellectual Devotional, accessed February 7, 2014, <http://www.theintellectualdevotional.com/blog/2010/04/16/the-black-legend-technically-true-but-thats-not-the-point/#comments>.

⁶⁶ Spencer, *The Yellow Journalism*, 124,131.

12 THE ECONOMIC CRISIS OF 1893

In order to understand reasons the United States went to a war in 1898, it is necessary to understand its economic and political situation in the last decade of the nineteenth century. An economic depression in the 1890's together with the Panic of 1893 resulted in political upheaval, which directly led to the Spanish-American War in 1898.

12.1 Causes of the Crisis

Railroad expansion together with agriculture innovations helped American farmers produce large amounts of agriculture goods. The resulting overproduction combined with increased competition from abroad, led to deflation, which intensified between the 1870s and 1890s. American farmers were forced to sell their goods at reduced prices, thereby reducing their profits, while they also found it necessary to buy expensive manufactured goods, leading to an economic downward spiral. Highly indebted farmers could not pay their mortgages and pushed the U.S. government to switch to a bimetallic monetary system that would increase the money in circulation. The switch to this system is one of the reasons the U.S. economy suffered through the in 1890s. In 1890, the U.S. congress passed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, which obliged the United States to buy 4.5 million ounces of silver every month for notes that could be exchanged for gold or silver. As the price of silver declined due to increased silver extraction, many Americans profited by exchanging silver for gold, causing the national treasury's gold reserves to drop to the statutory minimum. The small amount of gold remaining in the U.S. treasury affected the country's international credit rating, damaging business confidence and prompting many companies to leave the United States.⁶⁷

The 1880s was a decade of enormous economic growth driven especially by the railroad industry. The irresponsible business policies of railroad companies marked by overproduction and hyper competitiveness undermined their economic stability. The Panic of 1893 began when the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad bankrupted, followed by other railroads causing a crash on Wall Street as banks, companies and ordinary Americans had invested huge amounts in the industry. When offer overweighed demand, market fell as a

⁶⁷ Walter Coffey, "The Economic Crisis of 1893," accessed March 17, 2014, <http://waltercoffey.wordpress.com/2012/11/30/the-economic-crisis-of-1893/>; redakce Peníze.CZ, "Stříbrná Panika (1893)," accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.penize.cz/15893-stibrna-panika-1893#rating>.

house made of cards. As other economic sectors like iron industry were dependent on railroad industry, bankruptcies of railroad companies affected the whole economy.⁶⁸

12.2 Imperial Aims of the Republican Party

As result of the 1890's crisis, Americans sympathized with Alfred Mahan and his idea of accessing foreign markets. After the Panic of 1893 the unemployment rate in the United States jumped to 18.4 percent and a revival of the economy via accessing foreign markets was seen as the most effective way, especially according to businessmen and republican politicians as the real cause of the crisis was seen in overproduction. As immigrants from all over the world represented cheap labor, American businesses generally preferred maintaining production and increasing foreign markets instead of producing less with fewer employees. In addition, it was the time after the 1893 that American politicians came up with new conception of the Monroe Doctrine and possibility of a war if needed in order to secure its ideals. As some of the foreign markets the United States wanted to access were in Spanish possession, Americans were willing to go to a war if needed.⁶⁹

The 1894 congressional elections, following the Panic of 1893, helped Republicans to take power and accomplish their expansionist and imperial aims. As one of the causes of the crisis was the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, which was supported mainly by Democrats and Populists, the American public had lost its trust in these parties. Although Republicans themselves voted for the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in exchange for the McKinley Tariff, they successfully took advantage of the situation and blamed Democrats for causing the crisis. This gave the Republican Party huge support among the American public, and Republicans won the elections in the most decisive victory in the country's history. The majority of Republicans agreed with U.S. expansion overseas and saw the United States as a future imperial power. Having the majority in both houses of congress, the U.S. international policy took the expansionist mood based on ideas of Alfred Mahan. The confirmation of the decisive victory of Republicans in 1894 came in the 1896 presidential

⁶⁸ Saylor Academy "Panic of 1893," accessed March 17, 2014, <http://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/HIST312-10.1.2-Panic-of-1893.pdf>.

⁶⁹ Allan T. Beaman, "American Economic Imperialism and the Spanish-American War Era" (master's thesis, The College at Brockport: State University of New York, 2013), 6-7, accessed March 17, 2014, Digital Commons; Lord Keynes, "Us Unemployment in the 1890s," *Social Democracy for the 21st Century: a Post Keynesian Perspective*, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://socialdemocracy21stcentury.blogspot.cz/2012/01/us-unemployment-in-1890s.html>.

election in which William McKinley, who supported the overseas expansion and the gold standard, won over William Jennings Bryan who advocated free silver. The revolution in Cuba in 1895 with the following Spanish-American war in 1898, served as a perfect opportunity to fulfill Republican aims. Although the war might have been unavoidable even under Democrat rule, it was Republicans who were more willing to go to war and who supported annexing Puerto Rico, the Philippines and Guam at the end of the war.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Spencer C. Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 197; Miller Center, "American President: A Reference Resource," University of Virginia, accessed March 17, 2014, <http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/cleveland/essays/biography/4>.

13 TELEGRAPH LINES IN THE CARIBBEAN

In the second half of the nineteenth century, electric telegraphy became an increasingly popular and efficient means of communication. Many telegraph lines, both domestic and international, were established. Underwater lines connecting the United States with Latin America and its markets, were a motive for the war, as all telegraph communications from the United States to the Caribbean and South America went through Cuba, which was at that time a Spanish possession.⁷¹

13.1 The Importance of Telegraphy

In order to understand the reason the United States would be willing to go into the war in 1898 because of telegraph lines, it is necessary to understand the importance of telegraphy in the U.S. market. In the last decades of the nineteenth century electric telegraphy facilitated international business and was important to the growing U.S. economy. American business-men and brokers increasingly relied on timely information sent via telegram. Telegraph lines gave Americans stock market information from all over the United States and world, at that time in the fastest way possible. Situation in important U.S. trading centers including stock markets could be quickly exchanged. This helped Americans to quickly respond to different economic situations. Price drop of a certain agriculture or manufactured product would then immediately affect the price in the other part of the United States or world. The importance of telegraph news from trading centers reflects in fact that many American business men were willing to pay for such information just to keep up with competition. As matter of that, telegraph companies like Western Union profited on daily provision of market reports. Thanks to ticker American businessmen were able to react to market changes in minutes.⁷²

13.2 American Investments in Latin America

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Americans invested heavily in Latin America. In the last decades of the nineteenth century Latin American nations like Brazil, Chile and

⁷¹ Gregory Jason Bell, e-mail to author, March 9, 2014; Economic History Association, "History of the U.s. Telegraph Industry," Economic History Association, accessed April 2, 2014, <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/history-of-the-u-s-telegraph-industry/>.

⁷² William L. Barney, ed., *Blackwell Companions to American History*, vol. [2], *A Companion to 19th-Century America* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001), 312; Joshua D. Wolff, *Western Union and the Creation of the American Corporate Order, 1845-1893* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 200-1.

Argentina became increasingly industrialized and thus increasingly attractive to American investors. American railroad companies helped to build railroad networks in these countries, and American telegraph companies stretched lines across the hemisphere, often alongside railroad tracks. Such infrastructure helped Americans to find new economic opportunities in Latin America and infiltrate new at a time when the American market itself was maturing. Additionally, telegraph lines allowed the United States a means to spread its sphere of influence southward.⁷³

13.3 Telegraph lines in Cuba

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, when Americans were accessing South American markets, the Spanish control of Cuba, itself a telegraph hub for the entire hemisphere, began to be perceived by Americans as a possible threat. In a worst case scenario, Spain could sever the connections, greatly disrupting American business and hurting the U.S. economy. Additionally, Spain was charging fees to the U.S. telegraph company that owned the Cuban lines, reportedly forcing the company to raise its rates. In order to get rid of the fees, one of the solutions could be military action against Spain. A free Cuba, would not only remove Spain from the equation but would reduce telegram rates, thereby increasing profits.⁷⁴

⁷³Thomas M. Leonard, *Encyclopedia of Latin America*, Facts On File Library of World History (New York: Facts On File, 2010), 891-2.

⁷⁴Gregory Jason Bell, e-mail to author, March 9, 2014; Sabin Americana, *International Ocean Telegraph Company Monopoly Extortionate Charges for Messages between Cuba and the United States* (Washington [D.C.]: Chronicle Print, 1870).

14 THE CARIBBEAN TOURISM INDUSTRY

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Americans gradually favored the Caribbean as a vacation destination. Including peninsular Florida, Caribbean destinations like Cuba and the Bahamas became popular among Americans for their tropical character. Although affordable only for wealth people at first, in the last decade of the nineteenth century, many travel agencies began offering Caribbean vacations at affordable prices. As result of the Cuban revolution that started in 1895, tourism in Cuba practically ended and the interests of American tourists, travel agencies and the Florida itself were harmed.⁷⁵

Even though the United States manufactured a large amount of goods for foreign markets, the Caribbean was only a small market. Caribbean tourism became an increasingly profitable industry. Cuba, being close to Florida, was a natural tourist destination, but as result of the revolution, Americans could no longer vacation there. Puerto Rico and the Bahamas superseded Cuba as tourist destinations, but Cuba still had great potential. The American intervention in Cuba in 1898 might then be seen as an attempt to restore the profitable tourist industry on the island. In addition, European companies were competing with American companies for control of the Caribbean tourism industry. Seizing Spanish possessions in the Caribbean would then eliminate some European competition and make it easier for the American tourism industry to take control of the region's business. Americans planned a canal through Panama for many decades, in part due to profits that could be made from tourism. Not only would the canal enable Americans to access foreign markets quicker but it would also enable them to extend the tourism industry globally.⁷⁶

14.1 The Plant System

Some tourist agents supported the war against Spain. One of the supporters was Henry B. Plant, the founder of the Plant System, which consisted of railroads and steamship lines, and hotels. After the Civil War, Henry B. Plant bought damaged railroads throughout the South, repaired them, and connected them to create a railroad network. Plant connected

⁷⁵ Polly Pattullo, *Last Resorts: The Cost of Tourism in the Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1996), 8-9.

⁷⁶ Pattullo, *Last Resorts*, 10; Catherine Cocks, *Tropical Whites: The Rise of the Tourist South in the Americas*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 50-51.

Florida to the South but also to the Caribbean. In the 1890s, the Plant System proved essential for Florida's economy, as it helped farmers, fishermen, cattlemen and manufactures to get their produce to market. The Plant system not only transported goods to markets but more importantly in this case, it transported many Americans to Florida any beyond. Plant profited greatly from his System, especially his steamship lines between Tampa, Florida and Havana, Cuba, but the Cuban revolution hurt his business. As a result, Plant supported the U.S. intervention in Cuba and the war against Spain itself. He offered his transportation services and hotels in Florida to the U.S. army during the war in 1898. A free Cuba would simplify his company's access to the Caribbean and would increase his profits by enticing more tourists to the Caribbean. Plant's desire for free Cuba, and his willingness to help the United States achieve that goal, made the Spanish American War more likely.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Henry B. Plant Museum, "Henry B. Plant Biography," Plant Museum, accessed April 7, 2014, <http://plantmuseum.com/henry-plant-museum/bio>; Florida Railroad Museum, "A Brief History of Florida's Railroads," accessed April 7, 2014, <http://www.frm.org/history/>; Gregory Jason Bell, e-mail to author, March 4, 2014.

15 THE DE LÔME LETTER

In 1898, the American public sympathized more and more with the Cuban struggle for independence, as American newspapers, especially the ones engaged in yellow journalism, overloaded Americans with anti-Spanish articles. Nevertheless it was not until February 9, 1898, when events escalated into an unmanageable situation that forced President William McKinley to appoint the U.S. Congress to declare war on Spain in 1898. The so-called De Lôme Letter together with the USS *Maine* explosion in Havana harbor on February 15, 1898 was the last straw in the American antipathy against Spain that resulted in the war a few months later.⁷⁸

To understand the effect of the De Lôme Letter, it is necessary to describe President McKinley's anti-war opinion that the letter helped to switch. Although the president is now generally considered imperialist and expansionist, he opposed the war against Spain as in his words "the war should be never entered upon until every agency of peace has failed."⁷⁹ McKinley emphasized international trade, which according to him was based on good international relations. As great pressure was put on him, both by the American public and politicians, to help Cuba gain its independence, instead of a military conflict McKinley tried to buy Cuba. The attempt failed, forcing McKinley to send a war message to the U.S. congress.⁸⁰

In February 1898, diplomatic relations between the United States and Spain worsened rapidly. The Spanish minister to the United States Enrique Dupuy de Lôme wrote a letter to his friend in Cuba. In the letter Enrique Dupuy de Lôme said that the only way how to deal with the Cuban revolution is via military action. More importantly, de Lôme described the President McKinley as a "weak" and "a low politician".⁸¹ When on its way to Cuba the letter was stolen by rebel supporter, given to Cuban Junta in New York and then printed in Hearst's *New York Journal* on February 9, 1898. The article immediately angered the American Public. Even though de Lôme resigned and the United States received apology

⁷⁸ Spencer Tucker, *The Encyclopedia of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars: A Political, Social, and Military History* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 616.

⁷⁹ Robert P. Saldin, *War, the American State, and Politics Since 1898* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 43.

⁸⁰ Quentin R. Skrabec, *William McKinley, Apostle of Protectionism* (New York: Algora Pub., 2008), 160.

⁸¹ The Spanish American War Centennial Website, "The Delome Letter," accessed March 25, 2014, <http://spanamwar.com/Delome.htm>.

from Spain, the public anger did not fade away. When days later the *USS Maine* exploded in Havana harbor and investigation revealed the reason of exposition, the pressure on the President McKinley was so big that he enabled the war to take a place. Although the war might have happened even without the De Lôme letter, at least it fastened the whole process of stepping into a war with Spain in 1898.⁸²

⁸² David E. Kelley, "Prelude to the Spanish-American War," Marine Corps: Association and Foundation, accessed March 25, 2014, <https://www.mca-marines.org/gazette/prelude-spanish-american-war-cuban-junta-delome-letter-sinking-maine>.

CONCLUSION

Victory in the Spanish-American War made the United States important player on the world stage. The United States succeeded in extending their sphere of influence. This sphere of influence was both economic and ideological. With new possessions like Puerto Rico, Guam, Philippines and freed Cuba, Americans could access those territories ideologically with relative ease and make those parts of the world culturally similar to the United States. Cultural and political similarity would facilitate American economic dominance in the Western hemisphere. One of the most important features of the victory over Spain was practically getting rid of the last European nation in the Western hemisphere. As Latin nations, established throughout the nineteenth century, lacked political and military power and European monarchies were practically pushed out of the hemisphere, the United States' national defense was secured. The most importantly, the United States gained strategic territories that helped them establish wide commercial system. This system enabled Americans to access foreign markets that were supposed to help the United States out of economic struggles. The Panama Canal build in 1904, completes the whole picture of American aim to access foreign markets and disprove the idea that the USS *Maine* was the only one or the main reason the United States went into the war against Spain. Without the victory, the United States might never become as successful nation as it is nowadays.

Understanding the motives of the United States for declaring war on Spain in 1898 also helps reader to understand the American character and U.S. foreign policy throughout the twentieth century, up to nowadays. Ideological concepts of Manifest Destiny, the Monroe Doctrine and the City upon a Hill were used by U.S. politicians many decades after the war. It helps to understand reasons of the U.S. interventions throughout the history. For instance, Manifest Destiny served as an excuse by George W. Bush during U.S. intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq. The thesis reveals the United States' will to protect its ideological and especially economic interests around the world.⁸³

⁸³ Pranay Gupte, "Manifest Destiny and Mr George W. Bush," Straits Times, November 5, 2004, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://www.pranaygupte.com/article.php?index=185>.

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