

Was the spanish-american war truly as john hay said, a "splendid little war"



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Was the Spanish-American war truly as John Hay said, a “ splendid little war”? Why or why not? The Spanish-American war was for the American government the first step on the road to becoming a “ global, police power”, for the Spanish it was the dissolution of Cuba and their empire, from said conclusion is it fair to name such a war a success, an aforementioned “ splendid little war”? [1] This essay hopes to examine the limitations of Hay’s statement, the war was to irreversibly “ shape relations between the United States and the rest of the globe for the coming century”, and it was the trigger that ultimately taught the U.

S. the cost of Worldimperialism. It is impossible to label such a conflict as totally triumphant and simplistic, it was fraught with diplomatic complications, both domestic and colonial, as is written herewith. The situation in Cuba before American intervention had always been precarious; Cuban rebels had continually opposed Spanish rule throughout the 19th Century, such was the animosity between the Cubans and Spanish that it culminated in the erection of some of the first Spanish concentration camps (reconcentrado).

Dubbed “ Butcher Weyler” by the American press, Spanish general Valeriano Weyler sought to curtail the uprisings, thus causing numerous deaths and epidemics among the Cuban inhabitants. [2] This onslaught erupted both the Cuban population and the American press into a fierce frenzy; American readers experienced a “ battle of gigantic proportions” between two rival newspapers, (New York Journal and New York World), “ in which the sufferings of Cuba merely chanced to furnish some of the most convenient ammunition”. 3] With so much public attention, the Cuban crisis became a <https://assignbuster.com/was-the-spanish-american-war-truly-as-john-hay-said-a-splendid-little-war/>

great exhibition of jubilation; there was much desire for intervention in the affair. Said exaltation was further prompted by the events of February 15th 1898, when the battleship USS Maine exploded in Havana Harbor killing 266 American sailors. Demands for war with Spain were imminent and colossal, the “yellow journalism” and its fabrication of news intoxicated the “whole Country with war fever”, slogans of “Remember the Maine! To Hell with Spain!” became very popular. [4] Theodore Roosevelt, assistant secretary of the navy, had always been of a militaristic nature, having commented that “This country needs a war”, and proclaiming President William McKinley as “white-livered” with “no more backbone than a chocolate éclair”, had proclaimed the disaster “an act of dirty treachery on the part of the Spaniards”. [5] The longing for war by the public and certain members of government following the atmosphere of hostility prompted, reluctantly, McKinley to declare war on Cuba. Having blockaded Cuba on April 22nd, Spain then subsequently declared war on April 24th.

The Spanish-American war was initially a “splendid little war” as described by Hay; it was an “unbroken series of American victories” within only 10 weeks of combat. [6] The major campaign of the war occurred at San Juan Hill, where a unit of newly formed Rough Riders under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Roosevelt along with two regiments of African American soldiers stormed a position atop Kettle Hill. So successful was the battle that Roosevelt “would rather have led that charge than served three terms in the U. S. Senate”, that he had been “revelling in victory and gore”.

The combination of defeat at San Juan Hill and around the port of Santiago in which “474 Spanish were killed...while only one American was killed and one <https://assignbuster.com/was-the-spanish-american-war-truly-as-john-hay-said-a-splendid-little-war/>

wounded” initiated the surrender of Santiago on July 17th, and the capitulation of Spain on July 26th 1898. [7] The Treaty of Paris of 1898, signed on December 10, 1898, ended hostilities between the Spanish and the U. S. The Treaty of Paris deemed that Cuba would become an autonomous country, and the U. S. acquired Puerto Rico and Guam with the understanding that Spain be paid twenty million dollars for the Philippines.

The scandalist treaty was the subject of much debate in the US Senate during the winter of 1898-1899, which was finally resolved on February 6th, 1899 by a one-vote margin of 57 to 27 with only two Republicans opposed: George Frisbie Hoar of Massachusetts and Eugene Pryor Hale of Maine. How was it that the U. S. a traditionally isolationist nation, become involved in such conflict. Nationalist historians argue said involvement to have been directed in accordance with constitutional diplomacy and the democratic principle of projecting liberty and national spirit; in essence the American Dream.

George Brown Tindall argues that the U. S. involvement in the war was initiated out of a “ sense of outrage at another country’s imperialism”; It is true to say that until 1899 Spain had acquired substantial influence over the sugar industry, territory held equated more than the fifty millions that the U. S. held in Cuba. Tindall also argues the impact that public opinion and ferocity had on the declaration of war; “ too much momentum and popular pressure”. Indeed said impact was so great that Tindall argues “ the ultimate blame for war, if blame must be levied, belongs to the American people”. 8]

Indeed “ many...were heavily influenced by the view that western

imperialism was justified by the (alleged) superiority of Anglo-Saxon and <https://assignbuster.com/was-the-spanish-american-war-truly-as-john-hay-said-a-splendid-little-war/>

Nordic 'races'", that it was warranted for the U. S. to spread her idealism and the American Dream to other civilisations. [9] There was however more imperialistic interests that influenced the coming of war, Revisionist historians proclaim the level of U. S. involvement corroborates with desire to defend its own interests that political expansion was in aid of guarantying economic control.

Indeed McKinley favoured said intervention and the establishment of a government made up of the "wealthy Cuban planter class", as he believed it could be controlled economically and "incorporated into the American Sphere". [10] In the short-term the 'prizes' of victory over Spain were appealing, not least politically, for many economic advantages came with the acquisition of territory in Cuba and the Philippines. These incentives therefore substantiate Hay's statement of the American-Spanish conflict as a said "splendid little war", an easy and cost-effective method of amassing a greater economy and furthering the American dream.

The overriding advantage for the U. S. was that it was a "little war", it was also cheap, "its cost was relatively slight", the fact that it took ten weeks and the lives of 'only' 5,462 U. S. soldiers (379 in actual combat) painted a popular picture of ease in what was the first U. S. campaign. [11] Politically the advantages came from the influence the U. S. gained through becoming a new major world power. With the precedent of waging and ultimately winning a foreign war, the U. S. had the potential of authority over future entanglements. Flushed with the easy victory over Spain, inflamed by the vision of a colonial empire, many were caught by the propaganda for a naval power". [12] Roosevelt stressed "we must strive in good faith to play a great <https://assignbuster.com/was-the-spanish-american-war-truly-as-john-hay-said-a-splendid-little-war/>

part in the world”, and by doing “ the world’s work by bringing order out of chaos...from which the valor of our soldiers and sailors has driven the Spanish flag”. [13] Moreover the U. S. obligation “ to take up the White Man’s burden” further exacerbated United States political intentions in the global theatre, indeed imperialists such as Senator Albert J.

Beveridge and Henry Cabot Lodge, “ stressed America’s moral obligation to extend the benefits of Anglo-Saxon civilization to a backward people”. [14] Indeed individuals such as McKinley commented on how “ to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died”. [15] Missionaries became increasingly involved in colonial affairs; they pursued the chance to convert the “ little brown brother” to Christianity for the “ sake of their souls”. [16] Economically the advantages of the war for the U.

S. were of paramount importance, and were of major influence in the initial reasoning for a declaration of war. Cuba in the 19th century was the “ sacred cow of American diplomacy...Cuba in American history has often been synonymous with sugar...which has the power of stirring more political devils in Washington than any other elixir”. Sugar was a major export of America and therefore Cuba became a major concern for economists in a time of unrest and conflict, a potential acquisition for the “ the Sugar Trust...the most hated trust in America”. [17] Big Business also profited from the notion of expanding global markets, with the new access to China and its multitude of consumers, businesses such as the American Tobacco Company foresaw the new opportunity, naming the “ Philippines (as) the key to the Far East”.

[18] Indeed U. S. involvement in Cuba was startling; Frank M. Steinhart of the <https://assignbuster.com/was-the-spanish-american-war-truly-as-john-hay-said-a-splendid-little-war/>

National City Bank of New York (NCB) became leading economic leader, and was therefore able to ascertain all of Cuba's resources under the NCB with their 24 Cuban branches. One governmental individual commented no how "Cuba is no more independent than Long Island". 19] Colonial empire really did suit the U. S. A. How then could such a "splendid little war" be so farcical, why were said consequences of war so detrimental to opinion concerning United States diplomacy? In essence there were three major complications, whose effects brought about severe limitations to Hay's statement. In short imperialism and the desire for expansion of economy and territory contradicted with U. S. tradition of 'isolationism', and that the idea of a nation with democratic values holding colonial control was unpalatable by many people.

The acquisition of territory far overseas put a great amount of strain upon U. S. administrative and defensive concerns, not least because of their practical distance, but also due to constitutional contradictions. It gave the potential for continental warfare between the Great Powers, and the reality of guerrilla warfare in unfamiliar civilisations. The empire also brought about a further internal conflict, with both governmental and influential individuals, which sparked off following the condemnation of U. S. imperial stature. The U. S. ad only recently acquired an empire of colonies, she was naive and inexperienced with the policing and protection of lands outside of direct U. S. jurisdiction. The activities of rebellious peoples soon exacerbated such concerns, initiating a period of guerrilla warfare, requiring a sharp adaptation of U. S. occupational forces to facilitate a war of counter-insurgency.

February 1899 marked the beginning of open hostility and aggression

towards the U. S. occupational forces by the Filipino insurgents. The U. S. now had to follow the precedent set by the British, that an empire was a mixed-bag of complications and benefits.

Proclaiming the slogan “ No hay derecho a vender un pueblo como se vende un saco de patatas” (“ There is no right to sell a nation like a sack of potatoes”), Filipinos launched vicious attacks on the forces of Aguinaldo and Mabini to oppose the “ new colonial masters”. [20] The U. S. soon discovered they were running a counterinsurgency every bit as brutal as anything that “ Butcher Weyler” had done in Cuba. Regular army soldiers, many of them veterans of the U. S. Indian wars, undertook “ marked severities” (as one termed it) against these new “ Indians”. One U. S. rmy officer wrote: “ We must have no scruples about exterminating this other race standing in the way of progress, if it is necessary”. Many questioned the point of attempting to hold such alien territory, when there were ongoing domestic problems, one newspaper editor commented that it was “ a sinful extravagance to waste our civilizing influence upon the unappreciative Filipinos when it is so badly needed right here in Arkansas”. During July 1902, the U. S. declared the Philippine Insurrection over, 200, 000 to 220, 000 Filipinos had died, and of whom only 15, 000 were actual combatants, which suggest that U.

S. forces consciously made war on the enemy's entire society that the concept of total war occurred fifty years earlier than 1939. [21] Critics of expansionism were another annoyance for the U. S. government. Those in office found the idea of dependency incredibly taxing, that the foreign acquisitions would perpetuate existing domestic problems. Other member foresaw that the ruling of said overseas dependencies would contradict, even <https://assignbuster.com/was-the-spanish-american-war-truly-as-john-hay-said-a-splendid-little-war/>



violate, the “ premises of republican government and the values of classical liberalism”. Although he failed to fervor his stance on U.

S. imperialism in the presidential election of 1900, William Jennings Bryan became a high profile contesteer of expansionism; as a result, the election did not provide a clear mandate for or against overseas empire. Opponents of the U. S. Empire even more fervent than Bryan established the Anti-Imperialist League in Boston to oppose the Philippine Insurrection and colonialism. Erving Winslow, Edward Atkinson, Moorfield Storey, William James, Andrew Carnegie, and former President Grover Cleveland added their voices to the anti-imperialist chorus.

However due to their narrow upper-class and governmental social base, the “ antis” were unable to generate much support for their arguments, indeed Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov Lenin described them as “ the last of the Mohicans of bourgeois democracy”. [22] Despite the apparent failure to change U. S. foreign policy, the Anti-Imperialism League became a major concern of the government, not least because its foundation was made of some actual political personalities thus creating the rifts of viewpoint shown, but it also caused embarrassment in the face of public and international scrutiny into the affair and the consequences of it thereafter.

Indeed such was the strain of the opposition that the government even suppressed the delivery of three anti-imperialism pamphlets to Manila written by, vice president of the Anti-Imperialism League, Edward Atkinson. Economists too were somewhat discouraged by the U. S. involvement in foreign relations, indeed the firm Gompers recognized the problematic

nature of overseas economic development. These economists feared the possible conflict of competition regarding the expansion of existing U. S. monopolies and conglomerates, foreseeing their impact on foreign society in the pursuit and carving up of land, resources, and profit.

Foreign competition was also of major concern, believing the “menace of cheap oriental labor” as detrimental to the U. S. proletariat. [23] The fabled China market and political engrossment of overseas markets meant the establishment of an “open door” in China and to the protection of the territorial integrity of China. This therefore threatened war, a political tool to be reluctantly used if other powers obstructed U. S. entry into China market, only war could sustain the policy. The rising sun of Japan and Tsarist Russia therefore threatened future U. S. non-entanglement.

In conclusion it is inaccurate to deem the 1898 war and Philippine Insurrection as “splendid little” wars; in reality each was fraught with so many conflicting problems and consequences. To many individuals the concept of colonial expansion was exciting, not least as it perpetuated U. S. power and influence but many sought to gain economically, spiritually and personally from said imperialism. The cost of empire was of higher significance however, as its political costs were severely detrimental to the McKinley administration, its effects on physical practicalities of defense and economy damaging, and the diplomatic portrayal of the U.

S. A embarrassing. Eighty years previously John Quincy Adams had predicted the outcome of U. S. involvement in global conflict, “no matter how righteous the initial cause...her policy would insensibly change from liberty

to force...She might become dictatress of the World". Hay was wrong, 1898 was never a "splendid little war", never a war "on behalf of people other than its own". [24] Bibliography B. Bailyn, *The Great Republic: History of the American People Vol. II*; Toronto, DC Heath Canada, 1998 J. L. Bates, *The United States 1898-1928 - Progressivism and a Society in Transition*; New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co. , 1976 H.

Brogan, *The Penguin History of the United States*; London, Penguin, 2001 H. Underwood Faulkner, *A History of American life Vol. XI - The Quest for Social Justice 1898-1914*; New York, The Macmillan Co. , 1961 S. Foner, *The Spanish Cuban American War and the Birth of American Imperialism 1895-1902. Vol. I*; New York, 1972 L. B. Francisco, and J. Shepard Fast, *Conspiracy for Empire - Big Business, Corruption and the Politics of Imperialism in America, 1876-1907*; Quezon City, Philippines, Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1985 E. Cobbs Hoffman, and J. Gjerde, *Major Problems in American History. Vol. II Since 1865*; Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co. 2002 M. A. Jones, *The Limits of Liberty - American history 1607-1980*; Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983 T. Mahan, *Lessons of war with Spain*; London, Sampson Low, Marston & Co. Ltd. , 1899 J. B. Moore, *Four Phases of American Development*; New York, Balt, 1912 C. S. Olcott, *Life of McKinley - Vol. II*; Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co. , 1916 J. R. Stromberg, *The Spanish-American War: The Leap into Overseas Empire*; U. S. A, The Future of Freedom Foundation, 1999 G. Brown Tindall and D. E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History - Sixth edition*; New York, W. W. Norton & Co. , 2004 ----- [1] E. Cobbs Hoffman, and J.

Gjerde, *Major Problems in American History. Vol. II Since 1865*, p. 98. [2] G. Brown Tindall and D. E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History - Sixth edition*, p. <https://assignbuster.com/was-the-spanish-american-war-truly-as-john-hay-said-a-splendid-little-war/>

759 [3] Ibid [4] G. Brown Tindall and D. E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History* - Sixth edition, p. 760 [5] Ibid [6] M. A. Jones, *The Limits of Liberty - American history 1607-1980*, p. 402 [7] G. Brown Tindall and D. E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History* - Sixth edition, p. 764 [8] Ibid, pp. 759 and 762 [9] L. B. Francisco, and J. Shepard Fast, *Conspiracy for Empire - Big Business, Corruption and the Politics of Imperialism in America, 1876-1907*, p. 135 [10] Ibid, p. 141 [11] G.

Brown Tindall and D. E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History* - Sixth edition p. 764 [12] J. B. Moore, *Four Phases of American Development*, pp. 147-148 [13] E. Cobbs Hoffman, and J. Gjerde, *Major Problems in American History. Vol. II Since 1865*, p. 100 [14] M. A. Jones, *The Limits of Liberty - American history 1607-1980*, p. 403 [15] C. S. Olcott, *Life of McKinley - Vol. II Boston, Houghton Mifflin co. 1916* [16] G. Brown Tindall and D. E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History* - Sixth edition, p. 765 [17] L. B. Francisco, and J. Shepard Fast, *Conspiracy for Empire - Big Business, Corruption and the Politics of Imperialism in America, 1876-1907*, p. 33 [18] H. Underwood Faulkner, *A History of American life Vol. XI - The Quest for Social Justice 1898-1914*, p. 310 [19] H. Underwood Faulkner, *A History of American life Vol. XI - The Quest for Social Justice 1898-1914*, p. 313 [20] J. R. Stromberg, *The Spanish-American War: The Leap into Overseas Empire*, p. 2 [21] Ibid [22] J. R. Stromberg, *The Spanish-American War: The Leap into Overseas Empire*, p. 2 [23] H. Underwood Faulkner, *A History of American life Vol. XI - The Quest for Social Justice 1898-1914*, p. 310 [24] E. Cobbs Hoffman, and J. Gjerde, *Major Problems in American History. Vol. II Since 1865*, p. 97