

Motives of the spanish american war

[Countries](#), [United States](#)



The Spanish American War started in 1898 and lasted about four months. Although the war might have seemed focused on freeing Cuba from Spain and gaining independence for Cuba and the Philippines, it was actually stimulated by nationalism and commercialism. Commercialism was a major factor when declaring war because the United States depended on Cuba and the Philippines for trade and business with other countries, especially in Asia and Latin America. Another major factor for the war was that the United States wanted to spread its Anglo-Saxon culture around the world and emerge as a world-wide power. Other minor motives for the war include the United States coming to the aid of the Cubans in their revolt against Spain and the feeling that the United States had the right to go into the Philippines because it had a superior culture. Commercialism played the most important role in starting the Spanish American War. The US needed Cuba and the Philippines because they were essential to trade and business. American business had an investment of about \$50 million in Cuba and an annual trade stake of about \$100 million. Senator Lodge said that whoever has control of Cuba will be able to control the entire Gulf of Mexico, which was important because Cuba was in the direct line of the Panama Canal. The Panama Canal was a key feature to the US Navy, so a base was needed in the Caribbean in order to protect it. A free and independent Cuba would help the US because it could put a naval base there. The overseas market was also important to trade and business with other countries. By getting control of the Philippines, the US would form commercial relations with countries in Asia. Raw materials that originated from Cuba and the Philippines were also important. Raw materials included sugar from Cuba and pineapples, rubber,

paper products and wood products from the Philippines. Control of these raw materials was very important to trade in the US. Nationalism was another major factor in declaring war against Spain. Nationalism emerged in the United States and all of its people seemed to support the war. The "yellow press" printed multiple stories of scandals, including the explosion of the Maine in the Havana harbor. The yellow press printed that the Spanish were responsible for this action, which led to the slogan "Remember the Maine." Nationalism and pride surged within the United States and war became imminent. The "rough riders," who were volunteers from the United States, invaded the Santiago harbor in order to drive out Spanish ships. They paved the way for the American army and forced Spain to sign an armistice. After the war was over and the Cubans were free, The Platt Amendment was passed. It provided that Cuba had to state in its own constitution that the US might intervene with troops in Cuba in order to restore order and to provide mutual protection. It also promised to sell or lease naval stations to the US. The doctrine of Manifest Destiny also played a major part in the war. The US wanted to expand its country and spread its Anglo-Saxon culture.

Imperialism was also part of this objective. What appeared to be an important motive in starting the war was humanitarianism. Although it appeared to be a primary motive, it was not equivalent to the other major factors. The United States went to war with Spain to help Cuba gain their independence. The Cubans began a revolt against their Spanish captors. General "Butcher" Weyler, a Spanish general, decided to put an end to the rebellion and placed the Cubans in reconcentration camps. These camps were unsanitary and ridden with disease. Many Cubans died "like dogs."

The US wanted to invade Cuba in order for it to gain its independence from Spain. The Teller Amendment was passed to show that the US was just going in to help Cuba and that it did not have an ulterior motive to annex it. Mrs. McKinley, the President's wife, expressed a deep concern about the welfare of the Filipinos. Once the US took control of the Philippines, the US civilized the Filipinos. Most of them were Catholic, but missionaries went in to convert them to the Protestant religion. President McKinley set up the Philippine Commission to form a Filipino government. He also had a plan of "benevolent assimilation" of its people which involved improving roads, sanitation and public health. A school system was also created and taught English as a second language. All of these actions taken by the United States were mainly to help the Philippines and Cuba. However, despite all of these actions taken during the war, humanitarianism was not a main motive. Racism played a minor role in the actions taken in the Spanish American War. For the main part, racism only took place in the Philippines. The US thought that it was the main duty of a wealthy nation to help them. It was said to be the "white man's burden." The US entered the Philippines because it thought that it was superior in every way. William Taft referred to the Filipinos as "our little brown brothers." Actions taken in Cuba and the Philippines could not and did not give equal weight as a motive to commercialism, nationalism, humanitarianism, and racism. Trade and business in the United States motivated the war. The US also wanted to emerge as an imperialistic power and saw a great opportunity to take over other lands. In analyzing all of the facts, it is clear that nationalism, the

desire to be a world wide power, and advance commercial interests were the primary factors that led to the declaration of war on Spain.