

# Spanish-american war causes

War



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The Spanish-American War (April 24, 1898-August 12, 1898) occurred as a result of various influences, including American religion, a sense of mission, political tensions between the U. S. and Spain, Spanish violence against the people of Cuba, and the Cuban desire for freedom from colonization. The war originated in the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain in February 1895.

The spreading influence of the Cuban conflict on America prompted the United States to go to war with Spain (History. com Editors, 2010). Although the “ mysterious” explosion of the battleship U. S. S. Maine, in Havana Harbor, was seen as the cause of the Spanish-American War, it was the United States’ increasing concern over political unrest in Cuba that prompted America to declare war on Spain.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Cubans were struggling to rebel under Spain’s oppressive rule. The Cuban conflict was injurious to U. S. investments on the island, so much so, that it almost ceased U. S. trade with Cuba. Meanwhile, on the insurgent side, the war mainly waged against property and led to the ultimate decimation of sugarcane and sugar mills. Furthermore, under the Spanish commander, Capt. Gen. Valeriano Weyler y Nicolau, Cubans were forcefully herded into “ reconcentration areas,” which were often located in and around large cities.

Spanish authorities made no effort to provide sufficient food, shelter, sanitation, or medical care to those who were suffering. Because of this, thousands of reconcentrados-rural Cubans interned in garrisoned towns or

detention camps by the Spanish military authorities-died from starvation, disease, and exposure (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019).

These harsh conditions were graphically portrayed for the United States to view through several media outlets. The idea of the American mission was the belief that the United States had a destiny to improve and enlighten the world, whether passively, by serving as a political and moral exemplar, or actively, by promoting liberal democratic values abroad (McCartney, 2012). Seeing the Cubans suffering also added to the commiseration America had for the colonial people struggling for independence (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019).

As conditions in Cuba worsened in 1898, President William McKinley sent the battleship Maine to Cuba to help protect American citizens and interests in Cuba. On February 15, 1898, an enormous explosion caused the Maine to sink in Havana Harbor. Although no one could pinpoint the exact culprit of the explosion, many Americans blamed Spain. President McKinley had been hesitant to go to war for many months, and he even offered to purchase Cuba through diplomatic channels.

However, public pressure to act became too great, and on April 25, 1898, the Congress of the United States approved a declaration of war against Spain (Argote-Freyre, 2019). When war erupted between Cuba and its colonial overlord Spain in the mid-1890s, many Americans saw the conflict as an opportunity for the United States to expand its influence (Sowards, 2019).

Following early combat in the Philippines, the chief battles of the Spanish-American War took place in the region around Santiago de Cuba. The first

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battle occurred on May 1, when Commodore George Dewey led a U. S. naval attack against Spanish ships near Manila, in the Philippines. The Spanish fleet was destroyed, and no Americans were killed. Shortly afterward, U. S. troops were sent to the islands to establish control, and the conflict then shifted to Cuba. By the end of May, the US Navy had confined a Spanish fleet in Santiago Bay in eastern Cuba; the two fleets continued to face each other for several weeks without having a single battle take place. In the meantime, the U. S. Army prepared a land assault, and the first U. S. soldiers arrived near Santiago on June 22.

On July 1, U. S. military forces, and a regiment led by Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, faced a small Spanish force at the Battle of San Juan Hill. Although the Americans suffered nearly 1, 600 dead and wounded soldiers, they still proceeded to defeat the Spanish. The press named Roosevelt's men the " Rough Riders" after they assisted the American forces in forming a constricting ring around the city of Santiago de Cuba. A few days later, the Spanish ships in Santiago harbor sought to break out, but U. S. vessels yet again defeated them after destroying the fleet. Spanish forces at Santiago finally surrendered in mid-July, but still, the United States refused to allow Cuban rebels, under the command of General Calixto García Iniguez, to enter the city (Argote-Freyre, 2019).

In late July, U. S. forces landed on the island of Puerto Rico where 8, 000 Spanish soldiers were waiting. Most of them were situated in the north, preparing to defend the capital, San Juan, on the island's north coast. So when U. S. troops landed in the southern part of the island, they were met with little resistance, with the exception of a small Spanish force at Coama.

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Before the U. S. and Spanish forces could battle at San Juan though, an armistice-an agreement to stop fighting-was reached on August 12 (Argote-Freyre, 2019).

The Treaty of Paris of 1898, through which Spain, having lost the Spanish American War, handed over to the United States sovereignty over the Philippines, as well as over Puerto Rico and Guam. Under the treaty, Spain also gave up all its rights in Cuba. In turn, the United States paid Spain \$20 million for the Philippine Islands. Although the Philippines and Cuba had sought independence before the war, the McKinley administration decided to retain control of both territories. Their reasons included a desire to expand U. S. power and influence and to “civilize” other peoples (Severino, 2012).

Soon, rebel forces in the Philippines and Cuba had to decide whether to accept or resist U. S. occupation. Before the war, both nations had fully supported U. S. intervention. However, after the war, this mindset changed for the Philippines, and they eventually turned against U. S. forces in a bloody guerilla war. This conflict, sometimes called the Philippine Insurrection or the Philippine-American War, was highly unsuccessful. The Cuban rebels on the other hand, agreed to disarm and accept the promise of an independent future. The United States proceeded to set up a military government in Cuba, which gave the United States broad powers to intervene in Cuba’s affairs. After several years of long-running tensions between Cuba and the United States, Cuba finally became its own independent island in 1902.