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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR:

THE BITTEREST SUNSET IN SPAIN

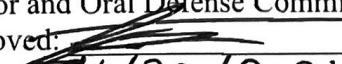
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Executive Summary

Title: The Spanish American War: The Bitterest Sunset in Spain.

Author: Major Alejandro Sánchez Macizo, Spanish Marine Corps

Thesis: The misguided Spanish colonial policy and Spanish government's instability made Cuba's loss predictable even before the American ultimatum of 1898. However, the United States' interest in Cuba's annexation was the key to the abrupt loss of the last Spanish overseas colonies. Spain's refusal to sell the island influenced the United States' decision to do everything possible to provoke war. Spain could not avoid the war, and finally, the Spanish government preferred the risk of a war against the United States to a local uprising.

Discussion: There is a debate among scholars about several issues of the Spanish-American war. First, historians analyze the reason that led to war between two friendly nations. American historians justify the war due to the Cuban people suffering, while Spanish historians point out the American interest in Cuba's annexation as the most probable motive. The second question of the paper focuses on analyzing why Spain could not avoid a war, where Spain had nothing to gain and much to lose. Finally, the paper studies about the influence of Spanish political and military decisions in the resounding Spanish defeat.

Conclusion: The Spanish-American War was the starting point for converting the United States into the first world power. Spanish colonial policy made Cuba's loss irreversible, but the Spanish refusal to sell the island was the cause for the war against the United States. Spain was not ready for the battle. However, the Spanish government preferred to lose the fleet in Cuba to a military uprising in Spain. The outcome was a catastrophe that nobody expected.

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Preface

“The solemn moment has arrived to fight. This is what the sacred name of Spain and the honor of its glorious flag demands of us. I wanted you to attend this appointment with the enemy with me, wearing the dress uniform. I know that this order is strange, because it is improper in combat, but these are the clothes that the sailors of Spain wore on great solemnities, and I do not believe that there is a more solemn time in the life of a soldier than that in which he dies for the Homeland. The enemy covets our old and glorious hulks. For this he has sent against us all the might of his young squadron. But only the splinters of our ships will he be able to take, and only obtain our weapons when, corpses, we float on these waters, which have been and are Spain's. My sons! The enemy surpasses us in forces, but it does not equal us in valor. Nail the flags and not a single prisoner! The motto of my squadron: Long live Spain! Battle stations, and may the Lord welcome our souls!”

Admiral Pascual Cervera y Topete's speech before the battle,
July 1898

One of my first memories in the Spanish Armada was reading with emotion the speech of Admiral Cervera before Santiago's battle. The famous speech exalted courage, honor, discipline, and loyalty, which are the essential military values that Naval Military School instilled in future Navy officers. Twenty years later, I have had the opportunity to investigate and analyze the reasons that caused the war between two friendly nations and the war's development during my Command and Staff course at the Marine Corps University. This work attempts to explain the events without feelings, only writing the facts that happened.

I would like to thank the Spanish Navy for the information provided, from official sources difficult to obtain, and especially the historians Alejandro Anca and Carlos Feito for the guidance and help they have given me. I also wish to mention Dr. Lon Strauss for accepting the assignment's tutoring, his time and valuable advice to develop this work.

Introduction

The 19th century was dramatic for Spain. The century began with the Spanish Fleet's loss in the Spanish-French defeat in the famous Trafalgar battle in 1805. Spain was involved due to its alliance with Napoleon. In 1808, Napoleon took advantage of Spanish naivety and weakness to invade the country, generating in Spain a period of struggle for its survival that also led to the insurrection and independence of the principal Spanish colonies in America, and consequently, the loss of the main country's income sources. In 1898, Spain ended the century as it had begun, losing its fleet, this time in Cuba's Caribbean waters. According to R. Alger, "Spain repeated the same mistakes that she made at the beginning of the century in the Battle of Trafalgar."¹ The United States expelled Spain from America after more than 400 years of Spanish presence on the new continent. However, far from being historical enemy nations, the two countries have had good relations since the United States' birth, where Spain had played a decisive role in the United States' independence. Spain was the first country to help the United States in its Revolutionary War, and the second, after France, to formally join the war against England and recognize the United States' independence.² George Washington stated that Spanish help had been crucial to win the Revolutionary War.³ The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Spain and the United States that King Carlos IV and George Washington ratified in 1795 demonstrated the excellent relationship. The first chapter of the treaty established the good intentions of both governments: "There shall be a firm and inviolable Peace and sincere Friendship between His Catholic Majesty his successors and subjects, and the United Estates and their Citizens without exception of persons or places."⁴ However, the relationship deteriorated as the expansionist interests of the young United States coveted the American possessions of the old and declining Spanish empire.

The easy and quick American victory in Cuban waters forced Spain to accept a peace agreement, which implied the cession to the United States of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam and the sale of the latest Spanish overseas colonies, the Caroline and Marianas Islands to Germany. Few contemporary wars have had such a clear and rapid result as the Spanish-American War of 1898. The Spanish American War confronted the Spanish naval experience against the young American Navy. The simplicity of the American victory impressed the international experts who expected a more drawn out war.⁵ In the aftermath, Spanish leaders exacerbated American superiority in order to avoid responsibility for the defeat. The Spanish defeat brought an end to the decadent Spanish empire, confirming to the European powers the American empire's arrival.

The misguided Spanish colonial policy and Spanish government's instability made Cuba's loss predictable even before the American ultimatum of 1898. However, the United States' interest in Cuba's annexation was the key to the abrupt loss of the last Spanish overseas colonies. Spain's refusal to sell the island influenced the United States' decision to do everything possible to provoke war. Spain could not avoid the war, and finally, the Spanish government preferred the risk of a war against the United States to a local uprising.

The predictable loss of Cuba.

Spain had lost Cuba long before the Spanish-American War. Political instability and disastrous colonial politics had degraded relations between Spain and its Caribbean colony to the extent that Cuba had become a Spanish headache that consumed the state's scarce resources. Indeed, only the quixotic Spanish pride prevented the nation from finding a pragmatic solution to the colonial discontent. Political turmoil existed prior to the Spanish-American War. Evidence of the tremendous political instability in Spain was the insane events' development. From 1868 to

1874, Queen Elizabeth II was overthrown, Spain proclaimed king Amadeo I of Savoy, a foreigner, who, given the magnitude of the challenge, decided to abdicate, yielding to the first republic government in Spain's history. Additionally, several regions in Spain rose up, a minor civil war on the peninsula and the first Cuban independence war broke out, and Alfonso XII, son of the dethroned queen, recovered the Spanish throne. All this happened in just six years. The mother land's political instability increased the feeling among Cubans that Spain could not continue to rule the island when it could not even govern the peninsula and that the time for independence had arrived.

In 1867, the Cuban information board, a local organization that advised the Spanish government on colonial policies, presented a series of reforms to the Spanish government. These reforms included increasing political freedoms, creating liberal institutions, toughening punishments against the slave trade, eliminating commercial charges, greater representation in their municipalities' election, and representation in the Spanish parliament.⁶ The Spanish government did not accept any proposals, sowing the seeds of the Cuban independence's proclamation one year later. Therefore, the Spanish political instability and the queen's exile was the expected opportunity for the Cuban rebellion, so it was no coincidence that a month after the Spanish revolution in 1868, the Cuban rebels proclaimed independence, starting a war that lasted ten years. For the Spanish revolutionaries, more concerned with consolidating the change of regime in the peninsula, the Cuban war of independence was an unexpected problem that would threaten the republic's future.⁷ In 1869, the republican government tried to introduce the long-awaited reforms in Cuba to improve the Cubans' situation and Spain's image. General Duce, governor of Cuba, published an order granting Cubans the same rights as Spaniards: freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom to elect their deputies in Madrid, and he proclaimed an

amnesty for the insurgents. However, the assassination of one of the rebel leaders, Augusto Arango, ruined the negotiations and drove to General Duce's removal.

From the beginning, the contradictions between the new Spanish government's progressive ideas and the economic interests of certain sectors of society condemned the Spanish revolution to failure. For instance, the Spanish bourgeoisie, who had supported the revolution, were against the Cuban autonomist demands since the reforms put their economic benefits at risk.⁸ The Spanish bourgeoisie were in favor of repressing the colonial markets. Wealthy Spaniards, such as the Catalan Juan Güell, supported the Spanish government's intransigent policy in Cuba, purchasing patriotic bonds to fund the war, while he enriched himself by selling the uniforms for the 200,000 Spanish soldiers sent to the war in Cuba.⁹ The most illustrative example of the liberal government's contradictions was slavery. On the one hand, slavery's abolition was part of the new government's progressive ideology; on the other hand, the opposition of the Cuban autonomists, allies of Spain in the war of independence and fervent supporters of slavery, made it challenging to balance interest.¹⁰ Hence, the Spanish revolutionary government, pressured by the Spanish bourgeoisie and Cuban autonomists, who defended their economic interests above improving conditions on the island or ending the war, could not implement the promised reforms or end with the rebellion, facilitating the return of the monarchy.

The arrival of King Alfonso XII temporarily concealed the colonial problems. However, the political alternation system resulted in abrupt policy changes that aggravated national and colonial problems. The principal problems in Cuba were smuggling and corruption. The elevated demand for appreciated and expensive merchandise from Cuba favored smuggling. Owing to the long coastline of the Caribbean island and the limited means of surveillance of the Spanish

government, illicit traffic reached figures of 30% of the total trade.¹¹ Smuggling had two direct consequences: the first was the reduction of incomes because the illegal trade did not pay taxes, and the second and more dangerous, protracting corruption to the entire Cuban administration.

Another reason that aggravated the corruption in Cuba was the continuously changing political situation in Spain. Constant changes in the Spanish government translated into short lived political appointments in the Cuban administration. Peninsular Spaniards always occupied these assignments, which was also a source of grievance for the Cubans. Each new government appointed "political friends" to these positions to reward their political support. Since the Spanish political situation was in such flux, the political appointees in Cuba knew their time there might be short, which led to corruption as many of them tried to get rich as fast as possible. The Cuban administration's mismanagement reached such ridiculous levels as public servants who arrived from Spain on the same ship as their replacements.¹² The electoral system also suffered from corrupt practices. The Cuban administration manipulated the censuses and voting systems to maintain a constitutional majority in local institutions. An example of electoral fraud was the local elections during the second war of independence. The constitutional party won with a majority in 31 of the 37 city councils of Havana's province, and of the 32 councilors of the Havana city council, only two or three were Cuban by birth.¹³ Corruption was a cancer that spread to the entire Cuban administration, affecting Cuban society's perception of Spanish legitimacy on the island and reducing the Spanish rulers' authority and credibility.

From 1874 to 1898, the restoration's alternate governments endeavored to modernize the Spanish colonial policy. In 1879, the governor of Cuba, General Martinez Campos, presented a reform project to Cuba in the Spanish congress. The plan promised the extinction of slavery, the reduction of trade taxes, and an increase in the budget for constructing and improving the island's

infrastructure.¹⁴ The proposal generated a great deal of discussion in the Spanish parliament and met fierce opposition from both liberal and conservative deputies. Due to the Spanish Congress's rejection and the lack of political support for his plan, General Martinez Campos resigned. The biggest roadblock to reforms were the numerous senators and congress members that were the owners of Spanish businesses in Cuba, who did not want to lose their commercial privileges, hindering the Spanish government from applying reforms in Cuba or selling the island to the United States.

In 1892, the liberal government approved a Royal Decree-Law, to avoid the Congress's veto, reducing the necessary payment to vote in Cuba, which doubled the electorate there. However, the reform plan for Cuba and Puerto Rico needed parliament's approval. Minister Antonio Maura's project diminished the governor's powers, created a Cuban judicial system, increased local administrations' powers, and changed the system for electing local authorities. The proposal provoked the complaint of the two major Cuban parties. The Cuban constitutionalist party did not want to lose power in the Cuban institutions because of the new election system, and for the independence party, the reforms were not enough, demanding full self-government. Once again, the political rejection of the reform plans ended in the government's inaction, which was incapable of solving the problem of the Spanish colonies. Therefore, Spain lost Cuba due to its inaction during the interwar period, turning the colonies' loss into an irreversible process.¹⁵ The consequence of this political system was a frustrating colonial policy. To resume the political mood, Spanish President Mateo Sagasta, who ruled Spain during the Spanish-American War, said: "I do not know where we are going, but I do know that wherever we go, we will lose our way."¹⁶ Therefore, the Cuban wars of independence were an inevitable consequence of the unfortunate Spanish colonial policy.

The American interest in Cuba.

Although Spanish political instability and its colonial policy were the Cuban insurrection's origin, some historians maintain that the United States' interference was the determining factor in the last Spanish overseas colonies' resounding loss. Analyzing the American justification, President McKinley argued that the reasons were humanitarian and for civilization in the prelude to the war against Spain.¹⁷ McKinley referred to the horrors of the war that were in Cuba since 1895. In 1895, the second and definitive war of Cuban independence broke out. The Spanish government, supported by the patriotism of the people who voluntarily enlisted in the army to defend Cuba's Spanishness, sent troops to Cuba until reaching 250,000 soldiers, four times more than before the war.¹⁸ However, the independence leader Maximo Gomez decided to apply an aggressive insurrection strategy, whose objective was to avoid a long-term conflict since war's exhaustion had been the reason for the rebels' defeat in the previous war. Maximo Gomez's total war included blockading the populations under Spanish control, threatening Cubans who traded with Spain, and destroying all factories and plantations.

When the war broke out, Spain appointed General Martinez Campos again as governor of Cuba due to his positive relationship with the Cubans. The Spanish response to the total war Cuban strategy was to implement a concentration and reprisal policy in Cuba. General Martinez Campos was against this policy, as he demonstrated in a letter to President Cánovas, "I, the representative of a cultured nation, cannot be the one to set an example of cruelty and intransigence."¹⁹ The Spanish government relieved General Martinez Campos in early 1896 by General Valeriano Weyler. Weyler arrived in the island with a different attitude, ready to end the insurrection. Weyler's strategy was to reconcentrate the peasants, which meant evacuating the fields and placing them in camps to deny the rebels the popular support necessary in the guerrilla

war and developing military cleaning operations in the evacuated areas. The reconcentration policy and the rebels' coercion caused the peasants' gathering in camps with poor living conditions and many human losses. Weyler's plan, the first of a modern army to deal with the guerrillas, demonstrated effectiveness in ending the insurrection. However, American opinion and government exclusively blamed Weyler for the misery that reconcentration caused, ignoring the rebel actions' responsibility in the peasants' suffering.²⁰ Weyler's reconcentration policy, a tactical military success but a strategic failure, was the perfect excuse for American politicians and tabloids to build the narrative of the American humanitarian intervention and Spanish evil. In 1897, the American government sent an official note of protest to the Spanish government for reconcentration policy on the island. Spain responded that it regretted the suffering and discomfort of the Cubans; however, Spain reminded Americans of the reconcentration policies and the private property's confiscations in the American Civil War and unfortunate episodes of the conflict such as the Palmyra's massacre, the Columbia burning, and the treatment of the Richmond prisoners.²¹

American authors employed the same motives as the American President for the intervention. The historian and strategist Alfred T. Mahan justifies the conflict due to the "iniquitous character of the Spanish rule in the colonies" and "deliverance from oppression,"²² and R. Alger states in his book, *The Spanish American War*, "it was only too evident that a state of absolute barbarity existed in Cuba, and that inhuman cruelties were of daily and contrived occurrence."²³ Both authors supported the war against Spain due to the reconcentration policy and the Spanish military campaigns in Cuba. Surprisingly, both scholars published their books on the Spanish-American War at the same time that the United States was employing intense repression against the Tagalog insurgents in the Philippines, including forms of torture such as

water cures, where more than 20,000 Filipinos died. Hence, American politicians and authors appeared to be worried about humanity and civilization's principles depending on the site and the American interests.

Another justification for the intervention was that Spain could not end the Cuban war of independence. R. Alger argued, "Spain lacked the power or the will to terminate the war."²⁴ From the first Cuban war of independence, the United States' support was fundamental for the insurgents and lengthened the conflict. All supplies for the insurgents, both personnel and material, came from abroad and land clandestinely on Cuba's open coasts. The Cuban Board in the United States organized filibuster expeditions, in which they transported armed groups of Americans, arms, and supplies financed with money from Cuban landowners exiled in the United States. At the beginning of the 10-year war, filibuster expeditions reached Cuba with relative ease, but as the war progressed, Spain tightened surveillance, making expeditions difficult. With the American government's consent, the Cuban Board began to contract American flag vessels to carry out the expeditions. American ships had free navigation rights established in the Treaty of Friendship of 1795. Spain complained to the American government to allow filibuster expeditions in American ships to reinforce the insurgence, causing the increase of tension between both countries and some incidents on the verge of leading to war, such as the *Virginius* incident.

The *Virginius* was a Confederate ship of the American Civil War. After the Civil War, Cuban insurgents residing in the United States bought the ship through an American front man. The *Virginius* carried out several filibuster expeditions, so the Spanish authorities knew its activities and ordered the Spanish Navy to capture it. In 1873, leaving the port of Colon, the Spanish Navy vessel *Pizarro* tried to stop it, but the USS *Kansas* prevented the capture, being the

first incident between the two Navies because of the *Virginius*. Months later, the *Virginius* departed from Jamaica with 52 crew members and 103 filibusters, 500 rifles, ammunition, and provisions.²⁵ The Spanish consul in Jamaica alerted the Spanish Navy, which was waiting for the *Virginius*. The Spanish ship *Tornado* discovered the *Virginius* when it was trying to disembark in Cuba, and after a several-hour pursuit, the *Tornado* captured the *Virginius*, taking it to Santiago de Cuba's port. The Spanish authorities in Cuba court-martialed them, executing 53. In the United States, a clamor broke out against Spain, demanding war against Spain. In the crisis negotiation, Spain agreed to return the ship and the rest of the American personnel with the requirement of returning the *Virginius* if the event's investigation showed that the *Virginius* carried the American flag fraudulently. Eventually, the American government recognized that the vessel carried the American flag illegally. However, the *Virginius* sank suspiciously in the navigation to return it to Spain to avoid claims after the war as the United States had presented to England for breaking neutrality in the American Civil War, for which England had to pay fifteen million dollars.²⁶

There were more incidents between ships of both navies, such as the *Alliance* and *Competitor* incidents, in which the American ships hampered the Spanish Navy to avoid the filibuster expeditions, increasing tensions between the two countries. The insurgents benefited Spain's desire to avoid incidents with the United States to supply arms and personnel to continue the conflict. Therefore, one of the reasons why Spain could not finish the Cuban insurrection was because the American's interference prevented Spain from finishing the Cuban revolution.

Then, if humanity and civilization are not enough to explain the American interference, what other interests pushed the United States to war against Spain? Spanish historians point out American imperialism as a fundamental reason for the war. The Monroe Doctrine and 'Manifest

Destiny' characterized the American political thought of the 19th century, amid the world's imperialist fever.²⁷ The United States, having reached the Pacific coast of the North American continent, was determined to continue its expansion into the Pacific and the Caribbean. In the Pacific Ocean, the United States had its eyes on Hawaii and the Philippines, as well as on Cuba in the Caribbean. The Monroe Doctrine rejected European interventions on the American continent and declared that Cuba's annexation was inevitable.²⁸ For instance, President John Q. Adams, when he was President Monroe's Secretary of State, wrote in 1823, "The annexation of Cuba it will be indispensable."²⁹ Before the Spanish-American War, the Monroe doctrine's influence was evident in personalities such as Alfred Mahan. Mahan, in his book *Lessons of the War with Spain*, openly recognizes the strategic importance of Cuba and Puerto Rico for the Panama Canal security.³⁰ Following Mahan's principles, the Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge defended the humanitarian reasons for the American intervention, while he also assured that Cuba was necessary for the Canal's control.³¹ The American's strategic interest in Cuba came from the first years of the United States because the American expansionist desires collided with Spain's interests as a neighbor on the continent. In 1805, Thomas Jefferson expressed Cuba's strategic interest when he affirmed that in the event of war with Spain, the United States would seize Cuba to defend Louisiana and Florida.³²

Economic interests also decisively influenced American interest in Cuba. After the Haitian revolution, Cuba became the largest sugar producer in the world. The prices of products from Cuba were lower than those of the English colonies due to England's abolition of slavery. In 1880, the United States monopolized 85% of Cuban exports of sugar, cotton, tobacco, bananas, and coconuts.³³ In addition, American investors took advantage of the island's economic crisis, caused by the first Cuban war of independence, to buy Cuba's properties at a

low price. The Second Cuban War of Independence caused significant economic losses in the American economy and damage to American properties. Therefore, commercial relations and American economic interests on the island were very significant, resulting in pressures on American politicians to involve the United States in Cuba's war.

The annexationist movement from Cuba to the United States was born intimately linked to slavery. England had banned the slave trade in its colonies in 1806. Spain signed the agreement in 1817, pressured by England in exchange for 400,000 pounds in compensation. Cuban landowners, who were against abolishing slavery because it threatened their way of life, believed that British pressure would end slavery in Cuba. The solution to their problem was to promote Cuba's annexation to the United States since the United States was a slave country and strong enough to resist British pressures. In addition, American southern states, which were slavery's defenders, believed that Cuba was the logical direction of American expansion, for which they supported the Cuban annexation movement. The annexation movement planned some conspiracy attempts on the island, and eventually, the movement's leaders had to flee to the United States. In the United States, annexionists formed the Cuban Board. The Cuban Board organized several expeditions to invade Cuba and achieve the annexation to the United States. Narciso Lopez, a former Spanish general and leader of the Cuban annexation movement, endeavored three times to invade Cuba with the American government's consent. In 1852, due to Narciso Lopez's invasions, the Spanish government convinced England and France to propose to the United States a joint declaration renouncing their interest in Cuba. The United States refused, claiming that it did not renounce the possibility of annexing Cuba and that France and England would not do so if Cuba were near their countries' coasts.³⁴

The United States first attempted to obtain Cuba through the dollar's persuasive power. The first documented purchase attempt dates back to 1848 through the American ambassador in Madrid. In the Ostend manifesto of 1854, the American ambassadors in Europe suggested that the United States purchase the island, and "if it was not achieved by peaceful means, other procedures should not be ruled out."³⁵ This statement, made public by mistake when there were no significant problems in Cuba, evidenced the American intentions concerning the island. After the American Civil War, the United States returned with its aspirations to buy the island in 1869. For the first time, Spanish President Prim considered selling Cuba since the first Cuban war of independence was ruining the Spanish revolution. An attack killed President Prim and prevented the negotiations from proceeding. Historians believe that Prim's intention to sell Cuba was the most likely cause of the assassination, ordered by politician contraries to the island's sale.³⁶ In 1897, and with the drums of war beating in the background, the American government presented the last official offer to purchase the island for 100 million dollars.³⁷ Historian Carlos Vila Miranda affirms that days before the 'Maine' sinking, General Porter, McKinley's special envoy, proposed to the Queen Regent the purchase of Cuba and that the Queen met the Spanish political figures, promising to hand over the government to the one who accepted the offer. However, no politician wanted to handle the political consequences of the sale.³⁸ Thus, the reasons for the American intervention in Cuba were more profound and due to American interests in more than just humanity and civilization. The political testimonies and the various attempts to buy the island accredit the United States' deep interest in annexing the Antilles' pearl.

Spain could not avoid a war that would end in disaster.

Although Cuba's war was an economic and human drain for Spain, Spain refused to vend Cuba under the quixotic flag of national pride; thus, the American government began to consider other alternatives to acquire the island. The outbreak of the second war of independence of Cuba coincided with the Democrat Grover Cleveland's presidency. President Cleveland declared the United States' neutrality in the conflict and gave orders to the US Navy and Coast Guard to cooperate with Spain to prevent neutrality violations. Due to Cuba's violent escalation, Cleveland offered mediation in the war, with Spain retaining its sovereign rights over Cuba. The American offer was particularly favorable to Spain, yet the Spanish government inexplicably rejected it. Spain declared that negotiating with the rebels would damage national dignity and threaten its authority.³⁹ History proves that Spanish refusal was a tremendous strategic error and accepting this mediation could have provided another outcome.⁴⁰ Indeed, only Spanish stubbornness and quixotism can explain the Spanish attitude amid a war that threatened to destroy Cuba and the Spanish economy.

The arrival of William McKinley to the Whitehouse darkened Spain's future in America. President McKinley hardened his attitude and demands warning Spain that the United States could not maintain its friendly attitude if the situation did not change.⁴¹ In its first months, the McKinley administration presented to Spain 73 claims to protect American citizens' interests, seven for the expulsion of journalists, and 83 for damages to American properties worth ten million dollars.⁴² McKinley's first decision regarding Cuba was to provide funds to help concentrated peasants, some of them Americans. His policy sought to force the negotiation to the threat of war. The jingoists and the yellow journalism decisively influenced McKinley's final decision to fight against Spain.

Jingoists were the supporters of an aggressive foreign policy that defend aggression against other states to benefit the country's interests. McKinley's decisions were the consequence of the influence of jingoist collaborators and a pro-war American congress. One of the most prominent collaborators was McKinley's Assistant Secretary of the Navy and future President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt argued that the purpose of American foreign policy should be to eliminate the influence of any European power in America, beginning with Spain and ending with the rest, including England.⁴³ Roosevelt's sentence, "the *Maine* was sunk by an act of dirty treachery on the part of the Spaniards,"⁴⁴ before the investigation, shows clearly his animosity towards Spain. An evidence of Roosevelt's war desires happened in February 1898. Although the war was still remote in February, the Secretary of the Navy, John D. Long, revealed in his diary about one day that Roosevelt replaced him. Roosevelt dedicated to issue orders for ships' distribution and ammunition's shipment, which included sending Dewey's fleet to Hong Kong to attack the Philippines in the event of a war declaration.⁴⁵ Roosevelt tried to make his war wishes come true. Long sent a recriminating note to Roosevelt for the decisions made that day without consulting him, revoking some of his instructions, although not regarding Dewey's fleet. T. Roosevelt, a friend of Senator Cabot Lodge and Mahan, played a crucial role in the planning and development of the war. The Consul General in Havana, Fitzhugh Lee, who the Cuban rebels considered an ally, was also decisive in the course of events. His reports to Washington exaggerated the island's conditions, and his alarmism caused the arrival of the *Maine* to Cuba. After its explosion, Lee's information encouraged the theories of Spanish involvement in the sinking, and even he falsified an alleged letter from General Valeriano Weyler to accuse him of having prepared the attack.⁴⁶

The U.S. ambassador in Spain, Stewart L. Woodford was also important to how events unfolded. He had the power of diplomatic negotiations until the declaration of war. Upon his arrival in Europe, the first thing he did was explore the European powers' attitudes toward an American war against the Spanish for Cuba. The conclusions he conveyed to President McKinley were that England and France would not oppose, and although Germany did not oppose, he warned of the German Emperor's unpredictability.⁴⁷ The American historian, Ernest R. May, examined Woodford and McKinley's correspondence. He highlighted the harshness of Woodford judging the Spanish government and its defense of the annexation of Cuba as reflected in one of his letters, "the annexation by force perhaps it provokes protests, but if it comes as a natural and logical result of a series of concatenated circumstances, I believe it would be accepted as an inevitable fact."⁴⁸ The politician and historian Rafael de Labra affirms that the purpose of the jingoists was to expel from America, with discredit and humiliation, all Spanish influence.⁴⁹ Thereby, the influence of the Jingoists, located in key positions in the American administration, determined the events development.

The yellow press also played a prominent role in supporting the war against Spain. The yellow press was a journalism style that emphasized sensationalism over events. The heyday of this journalism came from two reasons: the technological advances that allowed the appearance of graphic journalism, which made news more attractive, and the newspapers' intervention in the origin of the news, seeking and even provoking them, since the important thing was not to inform but to sell newspapers. The best evidence of this journalism was the famous anecdote between F. Remington and R. Hearst. Remington, who worked for the newspaper *New York Journal* as a photojournalist in Cuba. When the artist asked to return in the absence of war, Hearst replied, "You furnish the pictures, and I will furnish the war."⁵⁰ Two newspapers

dominated the American market at the end of the 19th century, the *New York Journal*, by William R. Hearst, and the *New York World*, owned by Joseph. Pulitzer. There was an open war between the two newspapers and their owners to achieve American journalism's undisputed leadership.

The war in Cuba was the ideal framework for developing their sensationalist, aggressive, and unscrupulous tactics to reach the leadership through exacerbated and manipulated news and invented stories to increase reader interest and sales figures.⁵¹ An example was Evangelina Cisneros's case. The Yellow press reported that a Spanish court sentenced her to death for killing a Spanish colonel who had tried to rape her. However, the trial had shown that Evangelina persuaded the colonel to go to her home where insurgents killed him. The press campaign in the United States was so remarkable that *The Journal* collected 15,000 signatures to request her release, including President McKinley and his wife. Hundreds of American citizens sent clemency requests to Spain, including newspaper petitions sent directly to Spain's Queen Regent. Far from stopping there, W. Hearst organized her escape from jail, and the Americans greeted Evangelina at Madison Square Garden as a heroine. Even McKinley received her in Washington. Due to the success of the story, Hearst started a campaign to raise funds for the insurgents to which the Americans donated large amounts of money, outraged by the Spanish's cruelty.⁵² Hearst and Pulitzer achieved the American citizens to identify General Weyler as the butcher Weyler. The historian Julian Companys affirms that Valeriano Weyler has been the foreigner who has concentrated more hatred of the North American nation until Hitler's appearance.⁵³ The daily press served McKinley all kinds of horrors in Cuba whose supposed protagonists were invariably Spanish. The yellow press reported barbarities such as the Spanish soldiers mutilated the rebels, played with the limbs, and kept the ears of the enemies as souvenirs, that the Spanish

inoculated the smallpox to the prisoners and then released them to infect the population, that to play baseball was a motive for the death penalty, auctions of Cuban orphans in public squares, and so, an endless range of calumnies.⁵⁴

The aggressive campaign against Spain raised American public opinion in favor of the insurrection, fervently supporting American intervention so that thousands of Americans volunteered to fight in Cuba because they could no longer bear the Cubans' infamies were victims. This anti-Spanish sentiment reached Congress and eventually President McKinley. The Yellow press's influence was decisive for American intervention so that some scholars refer to the Spanish-American War as the Hearst's War.⁵⁵ However, the spark that lit the war's fuse was the *Maine's* sinking in Havana. *The Journal* and *The World* decided to turn the incident into the 'casus belli'. Both newspapers dedicated an average of eight pages to the *Maine* and sold an average of 1 million newspapers per day with sensational news about the sinking and the Spanish barbarians.⁵⁶

After exploding under strange circumstances, the *USS Maine* sank in Havana's port on February 15, 1898. Although the first official statements did not rule out an accident, the press covers, blaming a Spanish mine or torpedo for the explosion, inflamed public opinion. Both countries organized investigation commissions to clarify the event. The American refusal to organize a joint commission was a clear sign of American political intentions. The American commission, made up of Navy personnel inexperienced in these investigations, delivered its final report only three weeks after the mysterious explosion.⁵⁷ The Spanish commission had great difficulties with the investigation due to the American refusal to inspect the wreck's interior due to the extraterritorial nature of the remains.⁵⁸

On the one hand, the American investigation result concluded that the explosion was due to a mine, although there was no evidence. Due to environmental conditions, it could not be a contact mine, there were no remains of an electric mine, no dead fish floating, and even with a reinforced guard, no one saw anything. On the other hand, the Spanish commission declared that the deflagration's most probable cause was an internal explosion of the ammunition stores near the bow boilers.⁵⁹ Of course, the American press or Congress did not publish the Spanish commission report because the Spanish attack was the perfect excuse for war. Ambassador Woodford soon dispelled the doubts about the American intentions about the *Maine*'s investigation. Woodford gave Spain an ultimatum to accept the American demands on Cuba, or President McKinley would take the report to Congress, which everybody knew Congress was in favor of the war. Spain did not accept the blackmail, putting an end to almost a century of attempts to annex the island peacefully. Jingoist's ideas succeeded in the American Congress, and the yellow press had prepared the American public opinion. The war was irreversible.

Nevertheless, before the conflict was inevitable, Spain had opportunities to have left the island in another way. In 1868, President Prim considered autonomy, independence, and even Cuba's sale. He stated, "Cuba has come of age and must be allowed to conduct its business. We only want to leave Cuba; however, this must be done dignified and honorably."⁶⁰ His words could not be more eloquent, given the outcome of the events. In October 1897, due to the hardening of the US government's position and the threat of war, Spain's government began a race against time to implement Cuba's reforms, which Spanish politicians had blocked for years. Between reforms highlighted: General Weyler's replacement to satisfy American society, reconcentration policy's end, and granting autonomy and self-government to Cuba and Puerto Rico.⁶¹ However, Cuba's autonomy was late. After three years of war and calamities, for many

Cubans, there was only one possible solution, independence. Moreover, President McKinley was not interested in Cuba's autonomy worked or that the insurgents obtained its independence because he longed for the annexation of Cuba.⁶² Thus, the Maine's explosion allowed McKinley to force war, avoid recognizing Cuba's independence, or before the Spanish reforms could succeed.

The American ultimatum decreased dramatically the Spanish alternatives about Cuba: to declare the war against the United States without being prepared, sell the island or grant the independence in exchange for commercial privileges with the island. Hence, scholars analyze why Spain did not adopt a practical solution regarding the island. The Spanish Nobel laureate Ramon y Cajal assures, "the only solution to the brutal ultimatum should have been the immediate recognition of Cuban independence,"⁶³ which seems obvious today. Historian Carlos Vila affirms that General Porter, McKinley's special envoy, proposed the Queen Regent one last offer to purchase Cuba. Queen Regent met the Spanish political figures, promising to hand over the government to the one who accepted the offer. However, no politician wanted to handle the political consequences of the sale.⁶⁴

Historians offer some reasons for the Spanish decision to declare war on the United States. The Spanish considered Cuba not as a colony but as one more province of the country, so they did not accept selling the island.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the Spanish press had turned the Cuban problem into a matter of national honor, pushing public opinion towards war, ensuring a Spanish victory over the American mercenaries. Finally, the Spanish government, between a rock and a hard place, preferred the risk of a war on the other side of the ocean to a popular uprising or military coup for not having fought for Cuba.⁶⁶ Therefore, although there were more practical solutions to the Cuban problem, the Spanish government, overwhelmed by events, was more afraid of the

Spanish public opinion and Army than the war's consequences against the United States. War was the lesser of evils.

Another reason to explain the Spanish incapacity to avoid the war was the Spanish international isolation. After the *Maine*'s sinking, the Spanish government began a frenzied diplomatic activity before the imminent risk of a conflict against the United States. However, the American war machine was already in progress, and there would be no way to stop it. As the historian Ramiro Guerra points out, "the United States had concluded the need to expel Spain from Cuba and then seek an understanding with the Cubans."⁶⁷ At the end of the XIX century, the Spanish situation was very precarious; Spain avoided alliances with a great power that could drag it into a costly conflict that the ruined Spanish economy could not afford. Spanish rulers sought the solution in dangerous isolation, although Spain could not maintain its overseas colonies without any solid alliance, as demonstrated in 1898.

Indeed, Spain requested the European powers' mediation to stop the conflict, although its international isolationism strategy denied it the explicit support of any of the great powers. The response of the European powers to the Spanish request was a collective note to President McKinley, in which, due to the English sympathies towards the United States, the European countries appealed to American humanity and moderation to settle the differences with Spain.⁶⁸ The note was nothing more than an act of goodwill that did not exert any pressure on the American government, so the note had no significance. Likewise, the same countries sent a collective note to the Spanish government in which they requested the immediate cessation of hostilities in Cuba to avoid conflict.⁶⁹ The next day, Spain ordered the ceasefire to the Cuban authorities. Spain abided by all the conditions that the United States had presented. However, President McKinley did not dare face the cameras' bellicose excitement, finally sending the

message to Congress.⁷⁰ Spain did not find the necessary support from the European powers to avoid war and even less in South America's countries. Spain had implemented an aggressive policy with its former colonies in America due to foolish Spanish pride, instead of establishing friendly and commercial relations with its former territories, as England had done with the United States. This enmity drove the new American republics to position against Spain, recognizing Cuban independence and even requesting the United States' intervention.⁷¹ Spain even requested the Pope's intervention, although none of the initiatives obtained the results that Spain desired. Therefore, despite the fact that Spain gave in to all the American demands, it did not serve to avoid the conflict, and Spanish international isolationism was a decisive reason for the final outcome.

On April 20, Woodford delivered the American ultimatum to the Spanish government, demanding the resignation of Spanish sovereignty over Cuba and its immediate withdrawal. Three days later, the Queen Regent signed the decree of war between Spain and the United States and declared the friendship treaty between them expired.⁷² The American fleet began a blockade of Cuba, so Spain had no other alternative to keep the island than send the Spanish fleet to break the blockade. On July 3, Santiago's naval battle took place, and in a few hours, Spain had lost its squadron and the war. Days later, Spain began negotiations for a peace agreement and the signing of an armistice. Spain had lost Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam in a conflict that T. Roosevelt described as "a splendid little war."⁷³

The extraordinary simplicity of the American victory surprised all countries and shocked Spanish society. The American fleet that won in Santiago's battle was superior in number and tonnage to the Spanish fleet. Five battleships, two armored cruisers, and nine protected cruisers were the bulk of the American squadron blocking Cuba. The theoretical Spanish fleet consisted

of one battleship, seven armored cruisers, three protected cruisers, and six destroyers. However, at the beginning of the war, Cervera could only have three armored cruisers, a protected cruiser, and three destroyers. The numerical analysis shows that the sum of the American tonnage was almost double that of the Spanish. The American artillery was 2.5 times higher in caliber, and the volume of fire favored the American squadron about 1.7 to 1.⁷⁴ However, Spanish political and military decisions were the reasons for the resounding Spanish defeat, aggravating the difference between the two fleets.

Neutral observers believed that both squadrons' strength was comparable, and the battle outcome was unpredictable. Indeed, prestigious magazines such as *The Engineer* doubted the confrontation outcome.⁷⁵ On the one hand, the theoretical strength favored the American fleet, but on the other, the professionalism and experience of the Spanish fleet seemed to balance the numerical disadvantage. Mahan shares this feeling, "the force of the Spanish Navy was nearly equal to our own."⁷⁶ This theoretical equality explains why some American Navy officers believed that the *Maine* loss could mean the difference between both fleets,⁷⁷ and why the US Navy sent the *Oregon* from the Philippines to Cuba to ensure the American fleet's superiority. Even several international analysts bet on Spain due to the exceptional characteristics of her fleet.⁷⁸ As Alger R.A states, "European Union, and largely American, gave the Spanish the superior force or French press was even surer of a Spanish victory."⁷⁹ Consequently, forces' analysis does not explain Santiago's resounding Spanish defeat that nobody expected.

The Spanish economic hardships, aggravated by the war's economic drain against the Cuban insurrection, seriously affected the Spanish Navy's effectiveness. Examples of economic problems were the several-month salary's debt to the military who fought in Cuba and the ridiculous Spanish Navy budget of 1897, 66% less than the 1868 budget.⁸⁰ Economic limitations

and constant naval policy changes hampered the fleet's renewal planning, diminishing its capabilities dangerously. The various government changes, with durations that barely reached months, and the application of different naval policies motivated none of the naval plans to materialize. The conservative government's naval plan of 1884 included the construction of twelve battleships and fifteen cruisers.⁸¹ This ambitious plan meant a strong impulse to fleet renewal, creating an environment of naval resurgence. However, just two years later, and with only one battleship under construction, the new Spanish government canceled the project to adopt a different plan based on the unreserved acceptance of the 'Jeune Ecole' theories.⁸² The 'Jeune Ecole' strategy questioned the superiority of the battleships through the joint action of torpedo boats, destroyers, and cruisers, so Spain abandoned the production of battleships, focusing on the construction of destroyers and cruisers.

Delays, problems, and budget reductions implied that numerous ships were not finished or were defective at the beginning of the war. Furthermore, the *Queen Regent's* unfortunate shipwreck in 1895 led to the temporary lack of ships in the war's Spanish fleet. The *Queen Regent* was a cruiser that entered service in the Spanish Navy in 1892. It was the first of seven cruisers' class designed by the *Thomson* shipyard in Scotland. The Scottish shipyard would build four and a Spanish shipyard the last three. The project was truly ambitious and revolutionary. Cruisers had very notable features such as cruise speed and autonomy and an impressive armament for its reduced size. The ship caused admiration in all the foreign ports that the vessel visited. However, the vessel had a significant design defect that would prove fatal to the fate of the war of '98. The flaw was the excessive weight of the main artillery and its placement on the deck to improve the firing range.⁸³ Consequently, in bad conditions, the waves went through the deck, so the ship could not resist a storm and sank near Spain's coast. The accident caused the

Spanish Navy to turn the two twin ships in service, the *Cisneros* and the *Princesa de Asturias*, into school training ships. Spain canceled the last cruiser construction in Scotland. Besides, the Spanish Navy had to completely change the ship's design of the remaining three cruisers, the *Alfonso XIII*, *Lepanto*, and *Marques de la Ensenada*.⁸⁴ Thus, none of them was ready for war against the United States, reducing the Spanish fleet's number in 1898 significantly.

The vertiginous events' development caught Spain completely unprepared even though the possibility of a conflict against the United States was predictable for some time. The two largest Spanish ships, the cruiser *Carlos V* and the only battleship, *Pelayo*, were undergoing modernization works, so Admiral Cervera could not use them in the war. At the beginning of the war, the *Pelayo* was in the *Forges et Chantiers* shipyard in France for the reform and extension of its armor due to medium artillery's appearance, and the replacement of its propellants. *Carlos V* was also in France, replacing the artillery mechanisms.⁸⁵ For this reason, Secretary of the Navy J. D. Long urged President McKinley to go to war before these ships were in service.⁸⁶ Hence, the two most potent Spanish ships did not hit a single shot in 1898. In addition, some ships suffered several breakdowns due to the lack of adequate maintenance. For example, the Cervera fleet's main ship, the cruiser Cristobal Colon, sailed into combat without mounting its main artillery, half of its secondary artillery were inoperative, and there were only thirty cartridges of fourteen inches ammunition.⁸⁷ Logistical problems, like coal supply, would be a constant nightmare for the Cervera campaign, and ships did not have the corresponding supplies and ammunition.

Moreover, unlike the United States, where T. Roosevelt had been perfecting war plans against Spain since June 1897,⁸⁸ Spain began the war without a clear plan for war, requiring Cervera to develop one during his stay in Cape Verde days before receiving the order to leave for

America.⁸⁹ Mahan resumed the Spanish situation perfectly, “we cannot expect ever again to have an enemy as entirely inapt as Spain showed herself to be.”⁹⁰ Therefore, the negligent Spanish naval policy, which could not build a fleet adequate to meet the imminent American threat, with continuous changes of criteria and without providing the necessary means for the fleet renewal, and the lack of the appropriate preparation for a war against the United States were fundamental reasons for the Spanish naval inferiority in Cuba.

Nevertheless, navy battles not only depend on ships but strategies and decisions of their commanders. Most of the Spanish historians who have analyzed the Spanish fleet Admiral Pascual Cervera's decisions defend his performance due to the American fleet's superiority. Even in the words of his adversaries, "placed in an extreme false position by the fault, military unpardonable, of his Government, Admiral Cervera doubtless did the best he could."⁹¹ However, some of Cervera's decisions are debatable and were decisive in the American victory. In defense of Pascual Cervera, the Spanish Admiral had alerted the Spanish government of the Spanish fleet's inferiority and the severe maintenance problems that the ships suffered. From the beginning, Cervera opposed the idea of sending the fleet to the Caribbean, considering it a wrong decision and a sterile sacrifice.⁹² Cervera's telegrams to the government show his resistance to government plans, in which he requested to go to Madrid to discuss the strategy and, in a concealed manner, be relieved when the Navy Minister ordered him to depart for America.⁹³ In the opinion of the British Admiral P.H. Colomb, “Cervera must disobey, return to Spain from Cape Verde, and let himself be executed with his captains, saving Puerto Rico and the Philippines for Spain.”⁹⁴ However, he did not do it and he set sail for Cuba, wholly convinced of his defeat and the uselessness of his forces.

Cervera's first controversial decision was his entry into the port of Santiago de Cuba. Although the Spanish government congratulated him on his skillful maneuvering to reach Cuba,⁹⁵ the Spanish Admiral had placed the Spanish squadron in a mousetrap. Cervera could have tried to force his entry into another port with more supplies, better coastline defenses, and fewer combat limitations, taking advantage of surprise and initiative, such as San Juan de Puerto Rico, Havana, and Cienfuegos.⁹⁶ However, he chose Santiago, knowing Santiago port's conditions that were challenging to access, and easily defendable to avoid the combat. Contrary to what Cervera had written during the voyage, "but if we were lucky enough to start with a good punch,"⁹⁷ he decided to act as a fleet in being and remain in port, even before being blocked.⁹⁸ Fleet in being is a defensive tactic to prevent the enemy from achieving any result, waiting for a better chance for a naval engagement.⁹⁹

Official documentation between Admiral Cervera and the Spanish authorities provides evidence that Cervera had opportunities to leave Santiago before being blocked, but he decided to stay in Santiago. On May 22, Cervera informed in the telegrams of his intention to remain in Santiago as there was no better port to go to, and on May 25, he regretted not being able to leave because of the blockade.¹⁰⁰ Cervera did not attempt to break the blockade when circumstances were more favorable for it. Captain Joaquin Bustamante, squadron's Chief of Staff presented to Cervera several plans to escape. Bustamante planned to go out on May 26 as the storm made the blockade difficult, and on June 8, taking advantage of a moonless night. Both plans would be at night and with the vanguard's destroyers to increase the surprise and cause chaos in the American fleet. However, Cervera exaggerated the enemy entity, the weather conditions, and the complexity of a night outing to remain in Santiago de Cuba.¹⁰¹ Given his inaction, the General in command of Santiago's defense, General Linares, requested to disembark the Spanish crews to

fight on land. Cervera accepted the request because he had the firm purpose of sinking the ships to block the bay if the enemy conquered the city.¹⁰² Therefore, Cervera never wanted to fight against the American squadron, contradicting the Spanish government's instructions.

Nevertheless, Cuba's governor, General Blanco ordered Cervera to leave Santiago de Cuba instead of destroying the ships as he expected. Cervera disagreed with the departure order, requesting confirmation and delaying the departure as long as possible. Thus, Cervera had no choice but to leave or face a court-martial, so his heroism is more than debatable. Cervera's strategy to break the American blockade was to plan a flight in the most favorable conditions for the Spanish squadron destruction. Admiral Cervera chose a daylight departure, all ships in the same heading and destroyers in the last place, against the 'Jeune Ecole' theories. Admiral Sampson confirms it in his report to the Secretary of the Navy, "the Spanish squadron had orders to avoid combat, and the battle degenerated into hunting. The Spanish flight plan, sailing one after another and in the same direction, dispelled all the tactical doubts and difficulties that might have arisen and facilitated our ships' task."¹⁰³ Ultimately, he did not make the most of the few advantages that the Spanish fleet had, increasing American superiority. Four hours later, there was nothing left of the Spanish fleet, and 383 Spanish sailors had died, while in the American fleet, there was only one death. Therefore, convinced of his defeat and forced to fight, Cervera chose a course of action in which the Spanish fleet's destruction was faster and easier, although the question remains whether he did it to avoid more deaths or demonstrate that he was right.

From the crushing defeat arose the myth of the American giant abusing defenseless Spain, David versus Goliath, the young American iron fleet sinking the old Spanish wooden fleet. Cervera fed the myth in his famous speech before the battle, "The enemy covets our old and glorious hulks. For this, he has sent against us all the might of his young squadron. But only

the splinters of our ships will he be able to take."¹⁰⁴ However, the reality was different. All the Spanish ships were metal-hulled and built after 1885;¹⁰⁵ even the Spanish cruiser Cristobal Colon was the most modern ship of all that fought in Cuba, with only one year in service. The myth that Spain had heroically defended the national pride against a tremendously superior enemy allowed the Spanish government and the Spanish Navy to avoid establishing responsibility for the disaster and save their image in the eyes of the Spanish public opinion.

After the signing of the Peace of Paris, Spain wanted to turn the page and forget the war without looking for a scapegoat; thus, everyone and nobody was guilty of the catastrophe.¹⁰⁶ For instance, the Spanish Navy prosecutor report aimed to decide if there was evidence to judge Admiral Cervera and analyze his responsibilities. In the report, the prosecutor enthusiastically defended the Admiral's actions, modifying some events in favor of Cervera and requesting the court-martial's dismissal. For instance, the prosecutor modified the sea conditions to defend Cervera's refusal to break the blockade during the storm, omitted the opinion of the Santiago port pilot who claimed to be able to remove the squadron at night without problems or because Cervera reported being blocked on May 25, when the American fleet arrived on the 26th.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, the effects of the myth of heroism also reached the United States. The transformation of the figure of Cervera into a hero for American society is especially striking, going from hated villain to hero in a short time as a representative of American values and pure nobility. The American press first considered Cervera intelligent and cruel, then a coward hiding in Santiago, and finally a hero. Even "American naval officers transformed Cervera into a worthy opponent by recasting his desperate escape attempt into a chivalrous act."¹⁰⁸ In the Spanish historian Julian Companys's opinion, this mystifying transformation is due to North Americans never having a clear conscience regarding their role in the origins of the Spanish-

American War.¹⁰⁹ Thus, the explanation to understand the Spanish disaster were the Spanish government's calamitous naval policy, inadequate war preparation, and controversial political and military decisions. Besides, the Spanish heroism myth was born to bury the Spanish government's responsibilities and navy and clean the American conscience for all the calumnies and false accusations made about the Spaniards.

Conclusion

The Spanish-American War has generated the interest of many historians to study this conflict. The war was the starting point for converting the United States into the first world power. It was the first step of the American affirmation beyond its interests in the American continent, opening a new chapter in the projection of its world ambitions. The war's reasons which drove to war divide historians into two well-differentiated currents, depending on the nationality and the cultural perspective. The Spanish political and economic crisis made it impossible for Spain to maintain an overseas colonial empire in America and the Pacific. Economic interests determined the Spanish colonial policy, so Spanish politicians hampered the reforms that Cuba needed. Corruption and mismanagement drove Cuba to the insurrection, resulting in a bloody conflict that split Cuba from Spain. At the same time, Cuba's annexation was a priority objective for the United States due to its strategic value and strong commercial relations with the island. Thus, the Spanish-American War was the alternative to Cuba's purchase, after the Spanish refusal to sell the island.

The United States used the tough Spanish strategy against the rebels as a lever for the American intervention. The yellow press manipulated news to arise the American population in favor of the war. Besides, the mysterious and fortuitous explosion of the American battleship 'Maine' in Havana provided the perfect excuse for the American government and Congress to

issue an ultimatum to Spain. The Spanish government did everything it could to avoid war, but its vulnerable international situation and concern of an Army uprising made it impossible to find a more practical and reasonable solution to the American ultimatum than war. The Spanish government declared the war with the United States as the best of evils.

Nevertheless, Spain was not ready for a war. The misguided Spanish naval policy and the limited budgets had significantly reduced the Spanish Navy capabilities. Admiral Cervera was against the decision to send the squad to Cuba. Cervera believed that Cuba was lost and the Spanish squadron had no choice against the American fleet. Few contemporary wars have had such a clear and rapid result as the Spanish-American War of 1898. Cervera eluded the combat, allowing the American fleet to block him in Santiago bay, and when Spain ordered him to fight, Cervera attempted a flight that resulted in easy destruction of the Spanish squad.

The Spanish-American War meant the end of the ancient Spanish empire and the United States emerging as the new great power of the 20th century. Spain, the first country to build a colonial empire, was also the first to lose them. Philip II's famous phrase stated that the sun never set in the Spanish Empire since there were always Spanish territories where it was daytime. In 1898, for the first time in 400 years, the sun finally set on Spain.

End Notes

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