

Cuban Nationalism and the Spanish-American War

Written by Sarah Clifford and Scott N Romaniuk

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The quest for sovereignty has been a long-standing issue in the Republic of Cuba. With the eruption of the Cuban War of Independence from 1895–1898, Cuba was torn between fighting for its independence from the Spanish Empire alongside the United States of America, with the possibility of being held as an American colony, or to fight against American attempts to annex the island. What resulted was the Cuban War of Independence being morphed into the Spanish-American War – the “splendid little war” as Secretary of State, John Hay, referred to it – with two imperialistic countries vying for control over the island with no regard for the native Cubans’ desire for sovereignty. The war was crucial on a national level for the Cubans, Americans, and Spanish, as well as on a global level as it changed the relationships between Empires as well as the power structures that had previously existed. Thus, the Spanish-American war was influential in multiple contexts, particularly the global, due to the changes that resulted from the war on both claims to territory and changes in foreign policies.

In this paper, we identify why the United States decided to intervene and its impact on the Spanish Empire, but also whether the Cuban Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Cubano, PRC) influenced the Americans’ decision or if it was done solely to guarantee their political and economic control over the region.[1] Through the use and analysis of letters from José Martí and Gonzalo de Quesada y Miranda, consular correspondence on filibustering and a speech from President William McKinley, we contend that the Cuban Revolutionary Party had little influence on the United States’ reasons to intervene, but was important in mobilizing the Cuban population both on the island and abroad, resulting in the Cuban War of Independence. The PRC was therefore responsible for the dangerous economic instability within the country, which forced the United States to intervene to protect its interests.

We utilize a broad range of scholarship throughout this paper, including the work of Ada Ferrer, Louis A. Perez Jr., and John L. Tone. These three scholars take different approaches to understanding the Spanish-American war while stressing the influence of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in it. For example, Ada Ferrer emphasizes social history in her work and the influence of the PRC in Cuba, while Louis A. Perez Jr. takes a more political and social approach to his work where he focuses on extracting the reasons behind why the Cubans requested the Americans to intervene. John L. Tone in contrast, looks at economic and political history to understand why the United States intervened in Cuba.[2] Tone explores both the economic and humanitarian reasons as to why the United States came to invade Cuba, but emphasizes the disastrous conditions in the country, as well as the unlawful killings of many Cubans by the Spanish military. In doing so, he demonstrates that the United States was not only motivated by financial gain, but also its desire to protect the many Cuban civilians who were being killed by the Spanish. This is extremely important for our paper as most of the secondary sources we include do not delve into the humanitarian aspects of the war, and thus it brings a different perspective to our paper.[3] Most of our sources tend to extensively focus on economics in relation to the sugar cane and slave trade industry, or social and political aspects with emphasis on the Cuban Revolutionary Party. Thus, all of the texts explicitly outline contrasting reasons as to why the United States intervened in Cuba and subtly discuss the question of whether the PRC was important in this regard or not.

Spanish Conquest and Cuban Nationalism

Less than a decade after Christopher Columbus discovered the island of Cuba, Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar, under the Spanish mandate to completely conquer the island, departed for the New World to establish the Spanish settlement.[4] The Oriente of Cuba was of immediate strategic importance for Spain and acted as a major

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component in the construction of the Spanish (colonial) empire. With the arrival of the colonizers and Cuba's occupation came the establishment of the prosperous capital, institutions, customs, imported cultures, and laws. Prosperity and riches for Cuba's conquerors were part of an unsavory dichotomy for the island's native populace who suffered bloodily.

Subjugation throughout the Oriente of Cuba brought about protest and violent resistance from locals who refused to be docile and submissive to the Spanish imperialists. Having defeated several hundred locals armed with antediluvian weapons and instruments of resistance, Spain was free to complete its program of colonization across the island. Servitude and slavery immediately followed, resulting in multiple and competing political, social, and economic orders, including levels of slavery.[5] Spain reinforced its systems of governance and defense, building Morro Castle (Castillo de los Tres Reyes Magos del Morro), Fort San Salvador (Castillo San Salvador de la Punta), and Real Fuerza (Castillo de la Real Fuerza) – the first stone military base and fortress in Latin America.[6] Cuba captured the attention of the British as well, and in addition to its strategic importance, the settlement constituted an economic treasure house in the New World, exemplified by Havana becoming the third most populous city in Spain's New World empire.[7]

Slow to emerge, relative to its counterparts in Latin America, the Cuban nationalist movement shared a curious relationship with Spain. Rather than imperilling the fortunes they built through their close relationship with their conquerors by directly confronting and violently resisting the Spanish, the elites intentionally avoided going down the same path as others had through their resistance movements in a search for self-determination. This is, however, not to say that there was a slow-growth of discontent among Cubans over time. By 1898, fewer Cubans acquiesced in Spanish rule and exploitation of both people and land as they had during most of the previous decades of colonial rule. Still, with the infusion of many thousands of mulatto or mestizo (blacks or people possessing mixed ancestry) into Cuba as slaves (more than half the population were slaves) and with Cuba having developed into one of the world's leading producers of sugar, the white elites still wanted to maintain their privilege and relative power.[8] To see the consequences of resistance, the white planter class of Cuba needed only to look to nearby Haiti, where a large slave revolt led by Toussaint l'Overture began on August 21, 1791, resulted in the destruction of the island and the elite plant class nearly wiped-out.[9] This effectively served as a means of containing any major aspirations by the elites to alter the status quo by freeing their slaves and view to expelling the Spanish.[10] Though there would be no way for the elites to know what might transpire in later years, the possibility of slave rebellion lingered in their minds and greatly affected their way of thinking and interpreting the costs and potential outcomes of independence and the collapse of the slave institution. The events of 1791 would reverberate throughout the colonies for decades to come.

Members of Cuba's planter class along with other elites slowly began to change their attitudes about Cuban independence with the decline of the Spanish empire and its eventual disintegration. While some looked to revolution as a path to Cuba's future, others gave their attention to reform over bloodshed, and the possibilities of Cuba having an autonomous government within the broader Spanish empire. Besides reform and revolt, Cubans considered turning to the relatively powerful United States and the annexation of Cuba, as we discuss in the subsequent section.[11] With this, the elites sought a continuation of Cuba's prosperous slave system while achieving political and economic independence. All options met an impasse. In April 1867, the *Junta de Información* convened in Madrid and made it clear reforms demanded by the Cubans were not going to be accommodated.[12]

With all options having waned, and due to increased pressures from Spain in the form of taxation, among other factors, Cuban elites, along with cattlemen, and patriots turned to independence on October 10, 1868.[13] One can see the growth and development of Cuban nationalism through a number of failed options that would preserve Cuba's system of slavery, bring Cuba closer to independence through special autonomy, or integrate Cuba into the United States, which would provide necessary protection from foreign interest. However, only after these options had been removed, did Cuban elites see no choice but to turn to insurrection in spite of the specter of Haiti half a century prior. Raising the banner of independence triggered the Ten Years' War. The war, which was both a product of and driver of further Cuban nationalism and nationalistic spirit, produced the most robust independence movement even seen in Cuba until that point – a coagulation of multiple classes, races, and ordinary Cubans.

The Beginning of the PRC

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As explored in the preceding section, the question of how to acquire independence from the Spanish Empire had been a topic of great controversy for many years in Cuba. In the 1860s, political discontent started to rise in the form of the question of independence and the desire to be free from Spanish oppression, which also came to motivate Cubans to push for the abolition of slavery.[14] With the massive slave population on the island, revolutionaries became aware that if the war for independence also turned into a war for the emancipation of the slaves, they would gain a substantial amount of the slave population who would fight in the war because of their desire to obtain freedom. It thus presented revolutionaries with an attractive opportunity but a quandary at the same time. The loss of working slaves, especially on the plantations, would effectively destroy the economic sector in Cuba, and thus would hurt the Spanish Empire and make the country more difficult to rule over because of the loss of its economic capabilities. A war for independence then had to be created that would involve the majority of the population of the island, especially the slaves, in order to have an extensive effect on the country to defeat Spain. As such, the Cuban War of Independence attempted to involve all those on the island who had a desire to be independent from Spanish colonial rule, which included many slaves.

With the concern over Cuba's economic and political strength and the almost inevitable war against Spain for independence, revolutionaries, including creole elites, believed it was in Cuba's best interest to be annexed by the United States and added as a colony instead of fight against the Spanish for an uncertain future.[15] The creole elites, or Cubans of European descent who were born in Cuba, were largely content with Spanish rule through the first few decades of the 19th century. However, as the creole elites continued to prosper, they grew increasingly concerned that Spain would be unable to suppress a slave rebellion or uprising in the country. The wealthy elites were primarily concerned with their status in Cuba and sought to ensure the continuation of their privilege. Equally concerned about the elimination of slavery altogether, which raised fears about the destruction of the status quo, the elites turned their sights to the United States as a possible guarantor of their economic position.[16]

The Cuban and American economies had become increasingly tied over the past few years, so a request to be annexed to the United States made both political and economic sense. The annexation would then essentially stabilize the economy but also rid it of Spain's imperialist control over the island. This was seen through examples such as Spain's taxation, as noted, on foreign imports and the introduction of tariffs on its goods sold abroad, which devastated the Cuban export economy.[17] The potential incorporation of Cuba into the United States therefore offered essentially no risks to Cuba because of the guaranteed stability the annexation brought to its mainly export economy.

Even though the annexation of Cuba to the United States was an option, many Cubans looked elsewhere for both a way to be free of Spanish rule, and to gain their independence. The desire to be rid of Spanish influence within Cuba not only resulted in the Ten Years' War, but also in the exile of many great Cuban revolutionaries and independence activists, such as José Martí, who led the new insurrection against Spain in 1895.[18] This decision by the Spanish government to exile those heavily involved in the Ten Years' War inarguably led to the creation of the PRC, which proved disastrous for the Spanish Empire. Martí founded the PRC on January 5, 1892 which challenged the Spanish Empire for Cuban independence and moved towards Spain's removal from the island.[19] Martí believed, contrary to many creole elites in the 1860s, that Cuba should not be annexed to the United States, and instead, should attempt to survive independently of any imperialistic influences.[20] He stated in a letter to the editor of the *Evening Post* that most Cubans "do not desire the annexation of Cuba to the United States. They do not need it." [21] Martí understood that the United States would attempt to impose its beliefs upon Cuba if they invaded and that they would just exchange one colonist for another instead of being granted freedom. He also demonstrated this belief in a letter to his close friend Gonzalo de Quesada where he stated that, "no way is good unless it guarantees Cuba its absolute independence," which referenced the idea that unless Cuba gained full independence, Martí did not want any external influence on the country, such as in the form of American help, even if it resulted in the removal of Spain's colonialist control over Cuba.[22]

Both Martí and Máximo Gómez, a general serving in Cuba's independence army, desired the recognition and support but were against American military intervention directly. As Martí asserted, freedom cannot be found in a mere change of masters. Through precise analysis of Martí's letters, it is evident that the PRC did not play a major role in motivating the United States to invade given that Martí wanted Cuba to be completely sovereign and independent.

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He knew the United States would never allow Cuba to enjoy full sovereignty if the Americans intervened. As Martí stated, Although this is true, the PRC still lobbied the American government for recognition in an effort to gain full independence, even though it was well-known that this effort would fail. This was Quesada's major undertaking on behalf of the PRC and he continuously sought American intervention in Cuba in addition to assisting with weapons shipments and various supplies to support Cuban revolutionaries fighting against the "oppressive" Spanish empire.

The PRC, especially in the days before the war, became increasingly influential because of its help in the creation of the plans for the invasion of Cuba.[23] Although the Cuban Revolutionary Party also had a widespread media base in the United States that was set up by Martí, as seen with the creation of the newspaper *Patria*, it was more instrumental in the preparation and mobilization of the Cuban population to go to war against the Spaniards than it was with influencing the American populace.[24] The PRC helped create a unified force for the Cubans both in America and in Cuba, and was thus the main reason for the success it had endured during the war in 1895. Martí's extensive use of the media, such as through the establishment of newspapers, helped cultivate the Cuban experience and mobilize the populace to go to war because of the need and desire to gain freedom from any outside influence. Although the spread of the PRC's ideals throughout the US to American citizens was an important factor to the success of the PRC, its campaign was widely used to influence the Cuban populace in the United States in order to create a unified force to fight against the Spanish for their freedom.

Martí and other PRC leaders were aware that the American populace could not pressure the US government to change its opinions about Cuba receiving its independence because of the negative viewpoints towards the potential loss of it as a protectorate state, so they also expressed their interests directly to the American government to gain both exposure and a potential ally who the Cubans could rely on if necessary. This was seen in a letter written by Gonzalo de Quesada to United States Colonel John D. Hay, where he requested that because of the power the United States possessed, they should prevent "the useless sacrifice of a human life." [25] Quesada pleaded to the American government to save the innocent life of a Cuban soldier and stressed the need to have humanity during a time of war.[26] This was mostly ineffective because the American government believed that due to their relations with Spain, it was of no benefit to help the Cubans in any way that would threaten the Spanish possession over the island if it did not suit the Americans economic or political interests. This then begs the question as to why the United States chose to intervene in Cuba if it was not pushed by the PRC?

The United States Intervenes

Although the Cuban Revolutionary Party did have an impact on American soil, in particular with other native Cubans, the party was not powerful enough to alter the political agenda of the United States and to force the country to invade, but to also convince them to resist the temptation of essentially colonizing the island. Instead, the United States justified the intervention because of economic, territorial and humanitarian influences.[27] The war of 1898 against Spain was also justified because of how weak and debilitated the Spanish army was, which made it an easy target for the vast and strong American military. If the Spaniards had proven difficult to defeat by the Cubans, the Americans may have decided to not go to war. With the work of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in fighting against the Spanish, they created a destabilizing environment that not only enticed the Americans into intervening to protect their interests in the region, but also made it a relatively safe war for the United States to become involved in. The United States therefore was not influenced directly by the PRC to go to war in Cuba, but instead, did it for reasons that effected both the economy and political atmosphere on the national and global scale.

In the early 1800s, the American economy became particularly reliant on Cuban sugar, which was signalled with the destruction of the majority of plantations in Haiti during the Haitian revolution, and since that time, the country turned to Cuba to provide almost all of its required sugar.[28] With a deteriorating Spanish economy in the late 1860s, Spain invoked a protectionist tariff across the whole empire to attempt to stabilize its economy.[29] Although this saw the Spanish Empire's economy eventually start to grow again, the country was forced to keep in place the tariffs on its many goods that it exported, such as sugar cane from Cuba, which resulted in its products being costlier to sell to foreign countries. The tariff of 1870 severely hurt the Cuban sugar economy and resulted in planters being unable to keep up with the prices of their foreign competitors. Cuban growers began to produce less crops because of the fall in demand, which resulted in "593,459,000 pounds less" of sugar cane being produced in 1877 compared to in

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1870.[30] This is demonstrated through a leaflet titled “The Sugar Question,” which further described how the Spanish tariff along with the decrease in the production of sugar cane not only hurt the Cuban export economy but also greatly impacted the American economy.[31] During the 1870s, the United States had become increasingly dependent on the Cuban imports it had received and by 1877 they began to import almost 91% of Cuba’s entire sugar cane production.[32] The two countries had become increasingly interdependent upon one another and they could not risk their relations being damaged for fear that their economies would be hurt. Cuba also became reliant on American buyers, especially with the increase in tariffs, as it became unable to compete with other producers, but the United States also reciprocally became dependent on Cuba because of the vast amount they imported from it. If sugar cane production in Cuba stopped, it would have been very difficult for the United States to replace the deficit they had in sugar from Cuba with sugar from another country, which displayed the importance of the Cuban economy and sugar production to the United States.

Another reason that the United States decided to intervene in the Cuban War of Independence was because of its desire to expand its territorial possessions into the Caribbean. Both through the analysis of a congressional record from the House of Representatives in 1898 and a newspaper article, it is evident that the United States intended to both expand its sphere of influence and remove Spain from its imperial possessions in the region. In the congressional record titled “Cuba: The Monroe Doctrine as Interpreted by a Missouri Democrat,” Champ Clark deliberated as to whether the Monroe Doctrine should be implemented in Cuba and how to deal with Spain. He came to the decision that “the United States ought to expel her from the Western Hemisphere” in a sheer effort to demonstrate its authority and to also protect its future imperial possessions.[33] Clark believed that the American’s current foreign policy stance demonstrated that it was within the United States’ responsibility to help those countries less capable and to protect them from other foreign influences.[34] Therefore, it was imperative that the United States invaded to protect Cuba so that it could be obtained as a territory in the future. The newspaper article titled “Ultimatum! McKinley Gives Spain Forty-Eight Hours to Take or Leave Our Terms” also denoted a similar message when it stated that McKinley called for the “immediate evacuation of Porto Rico and the Spanish islands in the Caribbean... and their cession to the United States.”[35] This primary source more strongly emphasized the American desire to acquire territory in the Caribbean and cement its authority in the region, in contrast to the earlier document mentioned, but both display the same motivation of the United States going to war with Spain over the desire to gain more territory and to begin its colonial empire.

Thirdly, the American government went to war against Spain for humanitarian reasons. As mentioned in an excerpt of President McKinley’s speech to Congress, he stated that the Americans needed to intervene in Cuba for “humanity, protection and indemnity for life...” and because the Spaniards are a “menace to our peace.”[36] According to McKinley, it was of the utmost importance to invade because of humanitarian reasons, but in reality, McKinley stated this to create a facade that the government could hide behind to justify the war with the American populace. Not only was this seen throughout McKinley’s speeches when he addressed the war, but also in cartoons and in consular correspondence which backed up President McKinley’s assertions that the United States needed to intervene for humanitarian reasons. In some consular correspondences, such as in “Filibustering Expeditions Against Cuba,” it was continuously stated how gruesome the Spaniards were towards the Cubans, such as when it was reported that a Cuban civilian “ultimately turned up in Cuba and was shot.”[37] The acknowledgement of atrocities that occurred in Cuba was used as a humanitarian reason to invade in the war because both the Cubans and Americans in the region needed to be protected from Spanish aggression. In the cartoon, “The Spanish Brute, Adds Mutilation to Murder,” a Spanish soldier is depicted as a murderous ape and is blamed for the sinking of the battleship *Maine*, as well as the deaths of all the soldiers on board.[38] This cartoon, in essence, was used as a propaganda tool to portray the Spaniards negatively to justify the war against Spain, as well as to mobilize the population.

The United States dispatched the *Maine* to Cuba when tensions between the United States and Spain were at their highest. With Cubans already rioting and destroying property, and threatening the peace and order of the colony, the *Maine* presence was a power play on the part of the American and a show of strength. The *Maine* inexplicably exploded on the night of February 15, 1898, killing 266 of its 355 crew-members. While many of those who were killed died immediately other died a slow and painful death as they slowly burned.[39] With the explosion having ignited the coal bunkers, the ship’s powder magazines exploded, causing tremendous destruction to the forward section of the ship. The American press jumped on the occasion to propagate the news of the destruction of and

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United States warship and deaths of hundreds of sailors to the south. They blamed Spain even in the absence of evidence that Spain had anything to do with the supposed attack. The media acted as America's megaphone, calling for revenge and effectively spurring the fury of the American public against Spain.

The sinking of the battleship *Maine* in Havana Harbor acted as a catalyst for the war and was the "final straw" to push the United States to invade Cuba. The *Main* thence became an American call to arms for those who wanted full-out war with Spain. Why is the destruction of the *Main* problematic? As mentioned, an explosion in the ship's forward magazines ultimately sunk the *Maine*. This cause was established vis-à-vis a board of inquiry by the United States Navy, though there remains immense doubt and much speculation over the true cause of the sinking. On March 28, 1898, the board established that an external mine was the cause of the initial explosion despite no effort having been made to determine how the device was set or who set it.[40] Studies on the sinking of the *Main* have continued over the decades with a recent computational analysis performed in 1998 by the Advanced Marine Enterprises (AME). Analyses of heat transfer showed that a fire in the ship's coal bunker "could have raised the temperature of the nearest canister of gunpowder (a mere four inches away on the other side of a quarter-inch-thick steel plate) to more than 645° – hot enough to ignite the powder, triggering a chain reaction in the adjacent magazines." [41] Spain was readily implicated in the attack by the United States government, which was already backed by the American public. The next day, President William McKinley issued an ultimatum to Madrid. Less than two weeks later, on April 11, McKinley asked Congress to declare war against Spain. This supposed attack was extensively discussed throughout the media and in the government as a justifiable reason to go to war, when in reality, the United States was most likely going to wage war against Spain anyway; but this incident offered the United States a convenient way to hide their true intentions. Therefore, the United States only intervened because of economic and territorial reasons, but in order to get the public to back the war, they needed to appeal to the populace, which resulted in the depiction of the Spaniards as murderous animals that needed to be stopped in order to protect both the Cubans and Americans within the region.

Throughout the plethora of primary sources utilized within our research, not a single one addressed the importance of the Cuban Revolutionary Party in the push for the United States to enter the war. In "Documentos Historicos: Archivo de Gonzalo de Quesada y Miranda," it became evident that the Cubans would not welcome American help within the region unless their independence was recognized. In a letter written by Quesada to American attorney William Calhoun, he discussed how the Cubans are more "determined than ever to conquer at all hazard their absolute independence [and will reject] all offers [of American assistance that are] not based on the recognition of the Cuban Republic." [42] This displayed how Cuban nationalism and the Cuban Revolutionary Party did not push the Americans to go to war, but instead, was more important in the creation of the Cuban War of Independence, which unintentionally resulted with the Americans intervening in 1898. Most of the sources we have noted argue the importance of both territorial acquisitions and the protection of American economic interests in the region as the major push for the United States to go to war, so although it is important to note the use of humanitarian reasons to justify the war for the American populace, it was not the main reason that the United States decided to go to war against Spain.

With the American decision to declare war against Spain in 1898 and the subsequent victory, the war resulted in the acquisition of Spain's possessions in the Caribbean and in the Pacific by the United States.[43] This included Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. The defeat of the Spanish resulted in the loss of a large amount of its colonies worldwide, and therefore led to the eventual downfall of its Empire because of its weakened state after its defeat. The war for the United States, in contrast, signalled the start of its Empire because of its claim to new territory, and the use of its imperialistic foreign policy that had not been extensively implemented until the Spanish-American war. The war led to the increase in nationalistic sentiment throughout the United States, but also fueled its expansionist tendencies, thus permanently altering American foreign affairs.[44]

Contrary Views and Gaps in Research

With the vast use of research material used within this paper, it is inevitable that there will be differing opinions and contrasting views that are present and are important to note. John Tone, for example, focuses extensively on the humanitarian reasons that the United States went to war against Spain while using statistics and facts to back up his

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research.[45] Although Tone notes how the war was affecting American imports and interests in the region, he focuses mostly on how President McKinley justifies waging war and how he believes that the humanitarian issues present in Cuba were the final push for the United States to enter the war.[46] Looking at Tone's comprehensive research through orders and reports from the American government, we cannot contest his analysis because of the extensive proof he has, but we do believe that he focuses too largely on the humanitarian reasons behind the invasion and does not pay as much attention to America's imperialistic nature and how it will not invade a country to protect the lives of foreigners, but moreover will invade because of other concerns in the region, such as its territorial or economic interests.

It is also important to acknowledge the overwhelming biases within our primary sources and how those have affected our research. Almost all of the primary sources that we used were from American sources and thus, evoked a strongly pro-American bias. For this reason, there was often no mention of either Cubans or the Cuban Revolutionary Party in the sources presented, so although our argument is that the PRC did not influence, but rather lobbied for, the American government's decision to invade Cuba, it could have been more important than what we acknowledged it to be. Although we do not believe this to be true and attempted to counter this bias with work accomplished by Spanish figures such as José Martí and Gonzalo de Quesada, it is still important to understand that there are limits to the research we used because it was mostly based on American information and their biases.

Another limit we faced in our research was a language barrier with many Cuban sources which made it difficult to find information that was not written by an American who discussed Cuba. Most sources that we discovered in the Cuban national records were in Spanish, which compelled us to seek American records just to gather more information that we could understand. This resulted in most of our sources being written by Americans or that emphasized the American role within the region, instead of that of the Cubans. Also, most scholarship that is currently prevalent either addresses the Spanish-American war of 1898 from the American point of view, or the Cuban point of view, and little attempt to use sources from both perspectives and to discuss those extensively together. This presented a gap in research as it was difficult to gather information that analyzed both countries and their opinions about the war together in one source. Although secondary work, such as Louis A. Perez Jr's extensive research on the topic of Cuba in the 1800s did help fill in some gaps in our knowledge, it is necessary to note that there are still extensive gaps in research today because of scholar's ill-attempt to analyze these two perspectives together.[47]

Conclusion

The Spanish-American war of 1898 was the first war of many for the United States where it attempted to expand its sphere of influence and gain more territory abroad. With its success in Cuba, the Americans essentially led to the downfall of the Spanish Empire because of Spain's loss of its territories in the Caribbean and in the Pacific, as seen in the United States acquisition of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Although the American government's economic and territorial interests in the region became vastly important in the push for it to go to war in Cuba, the Cuban Revolutionary Party was still integral in beginning the Cuban War of Independence in 1895 and the creation of a destabilizing atmosphere in Cuba that resulted in the United States needing to intervene in order to maintain its interests abroad and to not risk the loss of its potential territorial possessions in the Caribbean. Therefore, because of the United States' political agenda, as well as its economic and territorial priorities, the PRC was not the main factor in causing the United States to go to war but was still an important factor in the creation of the Spanish-American War of 1898.

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