

The Causes of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War

Source A

The situation here [in Washington D.C.] remains the same. Everything depends on the political and military outcome in Cuba. ...

McKinley is weak and a bidder for the admiration of the crowd, besides being a would-be politician who tries to leave a door open behind himself while keeping on good terms with the jingoes of his party. ...

It would be very advantageous to take up, even if only for effect, the question of commercial relations, and to have a man of some prominence sent hither in order that I may make use of him here to carry on propaganda among the Senators and others in opposition to the [Cuban] junta ...

Excerpt from a letter written by Enrique de Lôme, Spanish Minister in Washington, to the Spanish Government, December 1897. Reprinted in Dennis Merrill and Thomas G. Paterson (eds), *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations. Documents and Essays, Concise Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), p. 167.

Source B



Political cartoon published in 1898, available at PBS, 'Yellow Journalism Cartoon Gallery'
<http://www.pbs.org/crucible/cartoon6.html>

Source C

The weeks that have elapsed since that fatal event of February 15th have been making history in a manner highly creditable to the American government and to our citizenship. Captain Sigsbee, the commander of the *Maine*, had promptly telegraphed his desire that judgment should be suspended until investigation had been made. The investigation was set on foot at once, and 75 million Americans have accordingly suspended judgment in the face of a great provocation. For it must be remembered that to suppose the destruction of the *Maine* an ordinary accident and not due to any external agency or hostile intent was, under all the circumstances, to set completely at defiance the law of probabilities ... [That] intense bitterness against the presence of the *Maine* was felt among the military and official class in Havana was perfectly well known to Captain Sigsbee, his staff, and all his crew; and they were not unaware of the rumors and threats that means would be found to destroy the American ship. It was, furthermore, very generally supposed that the Spanish preparation for the defense of Havana had included mines and torpedoes in the harbor. At the time when the *Maine* went to Havana, it was a notorious fact that the relations between the Spain and the United States were so strained that war was regarded as inevitable. If war had actually been declared while the *Maine* was at Havana, it is not likely that the Spanish would have permitted the ship's departure without an effort to do her harm.

Excerpt from an article by Albert Shaw, 'The Blowing Up of the *Maine*', *American Monthly Review of Reviews* (April 1898), at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/ashaw39.htm>

Source D

The grounds for ... intervention may be briefly summarized as follows:

First. In the cause of humanity and to put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation, and horrible miseries now existing there, and which the parties to the conflict are either unable or unwilling to stop or mitigate. It is no answer to say this is all in another country, belonging to another nation, and is therefore none of our business. It is specially our duty, for it is right at our door.

Second. We owe it to our citizens in Cuba to afford them that protection and indemnity for life and property which no government there can or will afford, and to that end to terminate the conditions that deprive them of legal protection.

Third. The right to intervene may be justified by the very serious injury to the commerce, trade, and business of our people and by the wanton destruction of property and devastation of the island.

Fourth, and which is of the utmost importance. The present condition of affairs in Cuba is a constant menace to our peace and entails upon this Government an enormous expense ...

In view of these facts and of these considerations I ask the Congress to authorize and empower the President to take measures to secure a full and final termination of hostilities between the Government of Spain and the people of Cuba, and to secure in the island the establishment of a stable government, capable of maintaining order and observing its international obligations, insuring peace and tranquility and the security of its citizens as well as our own, and to use the military and naval forces of the United States as may be necessary for these purposes.

Excerpt from President McKinley's Message to Congress, 11 April 1898. Reprinted in Dennis Merrill and Thomas G. Paterson (eds), *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations. Documents and Essays, Concise Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), p. 171.

Source E

Article I. The Government of Cuba shall never enter into any treaty or other compact with any foreign power or powers which will impair or tend to impair the independence of Cuba, nor in any manner authorize or permit any foreign power or powers to obtain colonization or for military or naval purposes, or otherwise, lodgment in or control over any portion of said island.

Article II. The Government of Cuba shall not assume or contract any public debt to pay the interest upon which, and to make reasonable sinking-fund provision for the ultimate discharge of which, the ordinary revenues of the Island of Cuba, after defraying the current expenses of the Government, shall be inadequate.

Article III. the Government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the Government of Cuba ...

Article V. The Government of Cuba will execute, and, as far as necessary, extend the plans already devised, or other plans to be mutually agreed upon, for the sanitation of the cities of the island, to the end that a recurrence of epidemic and infectious diseases may be prevented, thereby assuring protection to the people and commerce of Cuba, as well as to the commerce of the Southern ports of the United States and people residing therein ...

Article VII. To enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba, and to protect the people thereof, as well as for its own defense, the Government of Cuba will sell or lease to the United States lands necessary for coaling or naval stations, at certain specified points, to be agreed upon with the President of the United States.

Excerpt from the Platt Amendment to the U.S. – Cuba Treaty, 22 May 1903. Reprinted in Dennis Merrill and Thomas G. Paterson (eds), *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations. Documents and Essays, Concise Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), pp. 174-75.

Questions

1. Using these sources and your own knowledge, analyze the causes of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War. **(30 marks)**
2. How useful are these sources for historians studying the causes of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War? **(20 marks)**