



The Spanish American War

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Question

- The Spanish American War was the result of shrewd maneuvering on the part of a number of Washington imperialists, such as Theodore Roosevelt, who pressured the weak and vacillating McKinley into war in order to gain a colonial empire in the Caribbean and the Western Pacific
- Evaluate this statement.

Thesis

➤ Although many imperialists in Washington pressured McKinley into declaring war against Spain, many other factors such as the sinking of the Maine, pressure from the press, US businesses desiring to acquire territory for business interests, and wanting to reunite the broken post-Civil War United States against a common enemy pressured McKinley into pushing a declaration of war against Spain through Congress.

Sinking of The Maine

➤ "The Maine" sunk in Havana harbor in Cuba on February 15, 1898 because of accidental reasons. However, the newspaper tycoon (and propagandist) William Randolph Hearst made it out to so it seemed like a plot by the Spanish Government rather than an accident. The phrase "Remember The Maine" was used to the imperialists' advantage to sway McKinley's decision

Pressure from the Press

➤ YELLOW JOURNALISM helped influence the fighting. In fact, the Spanish American War has often been called "The Newspaper War" because of the influence of the sensationalist press, such as Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer. The New York Journal published a copy of a letter from Spanish Foreign Minister Enrique Dupuy de Lome who criticizing McKinley as being weak and concerned only with gaining favor of the crowd on February 9, 1898. De Lome's unflattering remarks about McKinley helped fueled the country's aggressive, war-like foreign policy.

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US businesses desiring to acquire territory for business interests

➤ The United States, who in 1898 bought 82% of Cuba's sugar, always eyed Cuba for its extremely productive sugar plantations. In addition, many US imperialists believed that Manila, Philippines, had the potential to become a major port similar to Hong Kong. The availability of these potential markets for businesses influenced McKinley's decision to go to war in hopes to acquire access to foreign markets in Japan and China through the use of The Philippines and the United States could potentially profit from the sugar plantations in Cuba.

Reuniting post-Civil War United States

- The imperialists wanted to reunite the United States after the Civil War by uniting them against a common enemy: Spain.

Theodore Roosevelt and Manila

➤ Roosevelt assumed the title of Acting Secretary of the Navy and sent a telegram to Admiral Dewey who commanded the U.S. fleet in the Asian Pacific. The telegram instructed the admiral that if war should erupt between Spain and the United States, he was to take offensive action against the Philippine Islands, which were then part of the Spanish Empire. Dewey followed his orders. Within days after war was declared, Dewey sailed to Manila, and on May 1, 1898, launched a surprise attack. This demonstrated the power of the United States Navy for the very first time, and captured the Philippines.

T.R. And the Rough Riders

- Theodore Roosevelt resigned from *Assisting/Acting Secretary of the Navy* and joined a ragtag team of soldiers called the *Rough Riders*. He was a soldier for many years, and described it as the best time of his life. Roosevelt believed that the population wanted a war, and was in support of it.

Conclusion

➤ In conclusion, the pro-imperialists influenced McKinley to change his decision and declare war on Spain. However, many other factors such as the pressure from the businesses and press of America, the sinking of the Maine, and the De Lome letter influenced McKinley to change the neutrality decision made by Grover Cleveland in 1895 and his own personal decision to fight the Spanish-American war.