

SUNY Plattsburgh

Economic, Strategic, and Rhetorical:

Justifications for U.S Hegemony in Cuba

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Cuba has occupied a unique place in the American mindset. It has, through the history of the United States been seen as a potential new territory, a market, and as a protégé to be taught and protected from all threats including itself. Despite the long history of relations the United States had with the island nation, the common views of the country have long been colored by bias. While this is not unique in history, Cuba is an interesting case study in the way that the United States saw its role in the world at a time of it increasingly becoming a great power. The United States had seen Cuba as a potential site for annexation, starting With the Jefferson administration.¹ Cuba was seen as vital to the security and stability of the United States.² The United States believed that it could not survive as a nation without Cuba. According to George Gibson, by 1845 “The *question* of acquiring Cuba had now become the *necessity* of acquiring Cuba.”³ By the turn of the 20th century, the United States no longer wanted to annex Cuba, but the island was too important economically and strategically to the United States to not be within the American orbit. To justify its economic control over Cuba, the United States used the rhetoric and representation of race, culture and gender to control Cuba and ensure it was firmly within the American sphere of influence.

Cuba has often been seen in American history as a natural extension of the Unites States.⁴ Because of its proximity, it was seen as an ideal site for American annexation. In the early part of the Nineteenth century, the United States was in a period of rapid expansion. In the 1840s, Texas and the southwest had been annexed in quick succession. Cuba along with Canada were seen as the next likely sites for annexation by many Americans.⁵ The acquisition of Cuba was

¹ Albert J. Beveridge, “Cuba and Congress,” *The North American Review* 172, no. 533 (April 1901): 535.

² Louis A. Perez Jr, *Cuba In The American Imagination Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 25.

³ George H. Gibson, “Opinion in North Carolina Regarding the Acquisition of Texas and Cuba, 1835-1855: Part II,” *The North Carolina Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (April 1960):186.

⁴ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 28.

⁵ Gibson, “Opinion in North Carolina,” 186.

seen as inevitable in the United States. The official American view at the time was that the Island could not be transferred from Spain to any power aside from the United States.⁶ That meant that Cuba had the options of remaining in the Spanish Empire, or becoming a part of the United States.⁷

The island of Cuba was seen as the jewel of the Caribbean.⁸ As a result, the United States was worried that the United Kingdom or France would try to annex the lucrative territory for their own benefit. When British and French nautical forces went into the region in 1823, the United States officially protested the actions.⁹ Cuba becoming a part of the British or French Empires was considered unacceptable by the U.S government. The United States wanted European empires in the western hemisphere to shrink, not expand. Additionally, European countries cutting their ties in the Americas opened up opportunities for Americans. This was seen as a good thing in the United States. Cuba was in a very strategic location with command over the Caribbean. As a result it was often described as a potential Gibraltar.¹⁰ The United States wanted to ensure that the region would not be dominated by a European great power. To this end, the United States during the Polk Administration attempted to purchase Cuba from the Spanish Empire in 1848 for 100 million dollars.¹¹ The Spanish declined the offer despite the size of the offer. The United States, while not pleased, was willing to support the status quo in the island. The United States was adamantly opposed to Cuba falling into the hands of the British or French, but it was willing to tolerate the island being controlled by Spain.¹²

⁶ Gibson, "Opinion in North Carolina," 185.

⁷ Beveridge, "Cuba and Congress," 535.

⁸ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 18.

⁹ Gibson, "Opinion in North Carolina," 185.

¹⁰ Gibson, "Opinion in North Carolina," 186.

¹¹ Gibson, "Opinion in North Carolina," 187.

¹² Gibson, "Opinion in North Carolina", 185.

Cuba was seen by many in the south as a possible addition to the United States to balance out the number of slave and Free states. This led the United States to worry about slave revolts in the Caribbean. The United States looked at the model of Haiti, and believed that if Cuba was to abolish slavery, it would run a high risk of becoming like Haiti and possibly inspire slave revolts within the United States.¹³ The population of the island at the time was almost equal between the white and black inhabitants, although the white population would become the majority by the time of the Spanish-American War. An independent, black run republic was unacceptable in the eyes of the American government at the time. Cuba having slavery was also seen as a way to prevent the south from losing the institution. The acquisition of Cuba was seen as imperative until the Civil War.¹⁴ After the Civil War, United States changed its policy in favor of abolitionism in the Island because it was no longer necessary to placate the south.

At this time, Cuba was demographically split. While there was a population of free black and mixed-race individuals, free individuals were mostly white colonists who were primarily of Spanish descent. There had always been a minority in the island that supported annexation in to the United States. George Gibson states “Some Cuban Whites said they would prefer annexation by the United States to Spanish misrule of government under a British protectorate.”¹⁵ These annexationists had their own motives, and the motives changed over time. Some were supporters of the increased economic standing the island would have while there were others who supported annexation because they thought slavery would be able to better endure with Cuba as part of the United States. Other Cubans believed that the influx of Americans would bring favorable racial

¹³ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 36.

¹⁴ Beveridge, “Cuba and Congress,” 535-536.

¹⁵ Gibson, “Opinion in North Carolina,” 188.

attributes to the Cuban population.¹⁶ There were also Cubans who simply thought that the United States was a better choice than Spain. Even while the Spanish controlled the politics of the Island, the economy and later even the culture were heavily influenced by the United States.

Although the view in Cuba that Cuba should be annexed into the United States was never very widespread, the view that Cuba should be independent of Spain did become rather common amongst the Cuban population. This was most prevalent among population that was not born in Spain. The Spanish Government experienced a number of major attempts by Cubans to militarily evict the Spanish presence on the island. These were, up until the Spanish-American war, defeated by the Spanish government.

By the end of the American Civil War, the United States had ended its policy of territorial expansion in the Americas. The goal, instead, became one of economic expansion. During the civil war the Spanish colonial administration had given unofficial support to the confederate government.¹⁷ According to Luis Martinez-Fernandez, the levels of support the confederacy received depended on the class of the individual, and how the confederates were doing militarily. At the beginning of the war, the Cuban populace was much more supportive because it seemed like the Confederates might succeed.¹⁸ The support was higher among the wealthy land owners and lower with the supporters of independence because they were often abolitionists. Cubans who were slaves, obviously, tended to oppose the Confederacy. At the end of the war, the popular position in Cuba had changed. Many Cubans in high ranking positions were worried that the support of the Confederacy would damage future relations with the United States.

¹⁶ Rafael E. Tarrago, "The Road to Santiago: Cuban Separatism and United States Americanism and how the Converged in 1898," *Iberoamericana* 1, no. 3 (September 2001): 63.

¹⁷ Luis Martinez-Fernandez, "Political Change in the Spanish Caribbean during the United States Civil War and Its Aftermath, 1861-1878," *Caribbean Studies* 27, no. ½ (January- June 1994): 38.

¹⁸ Martinez-Fernandez, "Political Change," 39.

Despite the decline in support for annexation, Americans watched Cuba, particularly when rebellions happened. For instance, the actions of General Weyler became widely publicized news in the United States because of the brutality of his tactics. In the later years of the Nineteenth century, there was a revolt against the Spanish rule.¹⁹ This was not the first of such revolts, but the Cuban revolutionaries were much more effective than they had been in the past. General Weyler was sent to Cuba to salvage the situation. He had already received the nickname “The Butcher” for his previous actions in wars in Spain; but he, in the eyes of many Cubans and Americans, earned the nickname in Cuba. When he arrived, he was given sweeping powers over the colony, becoming a virtual dictator.²⁰ The war was not a war of pitched battles of thousands of soldiers in the field. It was a war of small skirmishes by Cuban rebels who would inflict some damage and retreat to safety. Weyler didn’t like this because it allowed the Cuban rebels to project more power than they otherwise would be able to. Not only was it making it harder for him to win, the Cuban rebels were able to find support amongst the population because of the popularity of the Cuban revolutionary cause.

Weyler took the action he believed would solve the problem of rebels getting support from the population. This was solved by him ordering the re-concentration of the Cuban population in the towns and cities. This order resulted in Cubans being taken from the fields and farms, and then moved to towns and cities. Because of the influx of new mouths to feed and the loss of agricultural production from the lack of labor, people started to starve. People weakened by hunger were easy targets to disease, and many thousands died. American observers saw this as a humanitarian catastrophe.

¹⁹ Terrago, “The Road to Santiago,” 70.

²⁰ “Weyler Sees A Light,” *New York Daily Tribune*, March 10, 1896.

There were two groups of U.S observers of Cuba. The first is that of governmental officials. These individuals were policy makers. They had power over how the United States actually treated Cuba. The second group was the American people. Their views were expressed through the popular culture of the time. The American people were influenced in the opinions through the media, and pushed for war with Spain. The United States acted, and over time the views of Cubans changed. American correspondent Crittenden Marriott wrote, “It is a war where, for every insurgent killed in fight, two Spaniards are so killed and five die of disease. Worse it is a war where the chief fury of the attacking party seems to be directed against the non-combatants, and where starvation is a potent weapon relentlessly employed against a vast throng of people who were never hostile, and who are now utterly desolate and vainly pleading for mercy.”²¹ He went on to blame the Cuban rebels for a part of the destruction saying “Add, that both sides have deliberately set out to destroy the country, the rebels burning or ruining the sugar-cane and tobacco fields, and the Spanish destroying everything else,”²² Marriott found reason to distrust the Spanish and the Cubans although his disgust was directed more at the Spanish military forces and the Spanish government.

Even before the American intervention, a racial caricature was being created of the Cuban. Marriott saw the Cubans as being split into two categories. He saw the Cubans of Spanish decent as being weak due to the climate of Cuba. He saw the black Cubans as being willing to fight, but likely unable to govern.²³ This created a narrative of the nation that seemed to imply that they would not be able to create a successful country. The attribute of being unwilling to fight against oppression meant that it was likely, in the view of many Americans, to

²¹ Crittenden Marriot, “General Weyler’s Campaign,” *Arena* 18 (1897): 375.

²² Marriot, “General Weyler’s Campaign,” 375.

²³ Marriot, “General Weyler’s Campaign,” 383-384.

take root in the country. This was a horrifying prospect because of how close Cuba was to the United States.

The United States intervention caused the war to be over very quickly. The United States fought primary campaigns in Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico, and some smaller fighting in other parts of the Spanish Empire. The United States viewed this quick and decisive victory as being evidence of the power of the American army and navy while the common Cuban view was that the United States only hastened the inevitable. Lenora Beck Ellis stated “we came when their need was very sore, relieving them from an oppression of some four hundred years’ duration: a relief that every devout Cuban, with 'Patria' upon his lips, is to-day ready to swear they could have soon and easily have achieved for themselves.”²⁴ They believed this because of the heavy amounts of damage they were doing to the Spanish military. They saw the United States as the straw that broke the Spanish back, not as their saviors.

The Post War world of Cuba was heavily impacted by the United States. The United States had promised to Cuba and the world through the Teller Amendment that its goal in the war was to ensure the independence of Cuba.²⁵ But where the Teller Amendment gave, the Platt Amendment took away. Orville Platt was an American politician and Senator from Connecticut. He paradoxically believed that Cuba had to be controlled in order to ensure the independence of Cuba. While this may seem contradictory to the modern ear, Platt’s view was widespread enough in the United States to ensure that the Amendment that bore his name was passed and added to the Cuban Constitution after heavy American influence. Platt’s Amendment stated that the United States was legally allowed to intervene in Cuba whenever Cuba took actions that went contrary to the American view of how the country should be run. Platt stated in an article he

²⁴ Lenora Beck Ellis, “The United States In Cuba,” *Arena* 24 (1900): 58.

²⁵ Louis A. Perez Jr, *The War of 1898: The United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 21.

wrote “When we went to war with Spain we declared that the people of Cuba ought to be free and independent, and we therefore disclaimed any purpose to acquire the island, and promised that when its pacification should be accomplished we would leave it to its people.”²⁶ He based his belief that Cuba should be controlled by the United States on his own racial biases.

Cuba, in his eyes was not ready or able to govern itself. He stated that “To insure the success of free government, certain conditions seem indispensable. There must be a homogenous people possessed of a high degree of virtue and intelligence. A sentimental longing for liberty will not of itself insure the maintenance of a republic.”²⁷ He went on to say that “Social, racial and economic conditions in Cuba to not at first sight promise well for the permanence of republican government.”²⁸ He believed that the Cuban population would not be able to govern itself due to race, and would require American intervention and control. Additionally, Platt wrote the actions of the black Cuban rebels out of the history very quickly after the war was over.²⁹ The American narrative was one in which not only were the Cuban’s contributions to the war marginalized, entire segments of the population who had fought for their own liberty were written out of the history entirely. The concept of Cuba belonging to a separate and backwards race that was inferior to Americans was common at the time.

The United States after the war, occupied Cuba for several years. Americans viewed this as a benevolent act that was solely for the benefit of Cuba and its people. Many Americans believed that Cuba was not entirely ready for self-government. The logic went that Cuba had never been independent. Cuba had never been Democratic in their history, and that Cubans were of a different class a human than Americans. The conclusions that came were that Cuba needed

²⁶ Orville H. Platt, “Our Relation to the People of Cuba and Porto Rico,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 18 (July 1901): 145.

²⁷ Platt, “Our Relation to Cuba,” 148.

²⁸ Platt, “Our Relation to Cuba,” 148.

²⁹ Platt, “Our Relation to Cuba,” 150-151.

to be occupied for a period of time to ensure that it wouldn't fall back into an old world Iberian style system of absolutism. The American view of Iberia was not a stellar one. This view was transferred over to Cubans due to Spain being the nation of origin for most of the white population of the new republic. The Spanish were seen as overzealous and perfectly willing to live under oppressive governments. Cubans were seen as being superstitious, lazy Catholics who were unable to gain independence for themselves and required a strong American hand to ensure their prosperity. Crittenden Marriott implied that the only reason the Cuban rebels were able to survive as long as they did was because of their guerrilla tactics, and the ineptitude of the Spanish. Even so, as Orville Platt stated "The fate of the United States is interwoven with the fate of Cuba."³⁰

Many Americans believed that increased economic ties between Cuba and the United States would be lucrative in addition to aiding in the stability of the country.³¹ During the colonial period Cuba had tended to have economic relations with as many nations as possible even when it was still under the Spanish flag. This is largely due to the lucrative nature of the trade involved and because of the closer proximity it had to the United States and Latin America. The United States had a large hunger for the goods the Cubans produced. The United States in return shipped industrial equipment to Cuba. After the war, the American government was very concerned that without American assistance, the nation of Cuba would become a failed state. The United States saw that as a threat to regional stability. As a result of this fear, Cuba was able to receive preferential tariff conditions from the United States.

³⁰ Orville H. Platt, "Cuba's Claim upon the United States," *The North American Review* 175, no 549 (August 1902): 147.

³¹ Beveridge, "Cuba and Congress," 540.

This preferential agreement with Cuba was opposed by many in the United States. It was put into effect by the Reciprocity Treaty.³² Sugar from Cuba was able to enter into the United States with a 20% smaller tariff than sugar from any other country.³³ Edwin Atkins argued that this was the source of the post Spanish-American War prosperity in Cuba and aided in its rebuilding.³⁴ While Atkins's belief may be disputed, the policy did lead to an increase in the sugar monoculture on the island. The reciprocity treaty along with the Platt Amendment formed the basis of America's relations with the new Republic of Cuba according to Mary Speck.³⁵ According to some, these agreements allowed the United States to benefit heavily. Not only was the United States able to have all of the benefits of an Empire, there were none of the economic costs of political domination.³⁶ This deal worked out better for the United States, than it did for the new Cuban Republic.

At the time, the United States was beginning to increase sugar beet production within its own borders.³⁷ While sugarcane needs to be grown in a tropical climate, sugar beets can be grown in the United States, and even mainland Europe. This changed the sugar needs of the United States, and resulted in less sugar needing to be imported. Even with sugar beets the United States was still an importer of sugar. Much of this sugar was from Cuba. Because Cuban sugar would have to compete with American beet sugar, some in the American government wanted to change the tariff to include Cuba with other sugar producers. This would have stopped Cuba from getting preferential treatment, and made domestic sugar more profitable. The

³² Mary Speck, "Closed-Door Imperialism: The Politics of Cuban-U.S. Trade, 1902-1933," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 85, no. 3 (2005): 449.

³³ Edward F. Atkins, "Tariff Relations with Cuba- Actual and Desirable," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 32 (September 1908): 59.

³⁴ Atkins, "Tariff Relations with Cuba," 60.

³⁵ Speck, "Closed Door Imperialism," 449.

³⁶ Speck, "Closed Door Imperialism," 451.

³⁷ April Merleaux, "The Political Culture of Sugar Tariffs: Immigration, Race, and Empire, 1898-1930," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 81 (Spring 2012): 35.

supporters of this change were primarily legislators who had sugar beet production within their districts. This case is an example of how racial iconography was used to promote economic goals.

Additionally, race was introduced into the justification for sugar beet production at the expense of imported sugar from overseas. April Merleaux argued that immigration and tariffs were linked. She stated “Immigration restriction was closely related to the tariff issue for many people who understood that foreign competition came in two forms: goods produced by ‘cheap labor’ living abroad and goods produced in the United States by ‘cheap labor *from* abroad.”³⁸ This means that the United States had the choice of either importing Cuban sugar to meet its needs or to allow immigration to fill employment demand on American sugar beet farms. The United States attempted to find the third option. Not only was immigration to Cuba restricted by the American occupational government, many assets were purchased in Cuba by American entrepreneurs and aided by the American occupying government. As a result, the nationalities that the United States didn't want were banned, and the Cuban sugar kept coming into U.S ports. For the United States, this was a good deal.

After the Spanish-American War, Cuba received large scale foreign investment in a number of industries. Much of this was from Americans, and American companies who wanted to produce agricultural products in Cuba. The most notable of these products was sugar cane. The wave of American investment was not unlike the gold rushes, and as a result it can be adequately described as a “sugar rush”. The price of sugar was high at the time, and the product was profitable even with the American Tariff on foreign goods. Because of the growing demand and its potential for making money, American industrialists bought up a large amount of Cuban land and other depressed Cuban assets that had the potential to be profitable in the future. These

³⁸ Merleaux, “The Political Culture,” 30.

assets included agricultural lands, and the Cuban electrical grid. The results of the deals with Cuba were an increased reliance in Cuba on the monoculture of sugar.³⁹ This had deleterious effects on other industries.

While Americans generally didn't run the daily operations of their assets, they did profit substantially from them. The owners were American, but the middle management was Cuban. The upper-class planters in Cuba did not weather the storm of the Cuban rebellion very well, and after the Spanish-American war a large number left Cuba. Both the Spanish military and the Cuban rebels destroyed economic infrastructure to damage the other side's war effort.⁴⁰ This left assets that were valuable, but cheap. This was a perfect opportunity for the foreign investor. In 1901, Orville Platt wrote "In recent times, some Americans and other foreigners have acquired estates, but the percentage of land thus held is small."⁴¹ This would change very quickly according to Mark Smith who states, "But after the war of independence, U.S. funding flooded into the Cuban sugar industry such that by 1902 North Americans controlled some 40 percent of the island's sugar production."⁴² Prior to the Spanish-American War and the Cuban War of Independence, there were two groups that owned most of the agricultural lands. These were the Spanish and Cuban planters. The Spanish planters were more numerous and supported the Spanish. The Cuban planters were neutral according to Orville Platt.⁴³ After the War, many Spaniards decided to not become loyal to Cuba and left. This increased the amount of assets on the market for North Americans to purchase. This worked in the favor of the United States. While the United States has prohibited itself from annexing Cuba, the actions of investors were

³⁹ Speck, "Closed Door Imperialism," 462.

⁴⁰ Marriot, "General Weyler's Campaign," 375.

⁴¹ Platt, "Our Relation to Cuba," 150.

⁴² Mark Smith, "The Political Economy of Sugar Production and the Environment of Eastern, Cuba 1898-1923," *Environmental History Review* 19, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 34.

⁴³ Platt, "Our Relation to Cuba," 150.

allowed. This gave the United States the opportunity to control Cuba economically instead of politically.

Many American companies at the time wanted to control the entire supply chain for their products to prevent issues in getting the products they needed. For the candy, and chocolate industry this involved owning the sugar plantations, the sugar mills, the railroads that transported the sugar and the factories in the United States that produced the products. Milton Hershey was one of these American industrialists. He was worried about sugar shortages and price changes.⁴⁴ He decided to expand into the sugar industry. This was part of the reason he chose Cuba for expansion. Cuba was also considered to have no chance of major political upheaval which was a major draw for anyone who planned on investing large amounts of money in assets. As Thomas Winpenny noted, "Hershey, like other American businessmen of his day, found it reassuring that the entire island came under the jurisdiction of the Platt Amendment, that the United States Navy maintained a base at Guantanamo Bay since 1903, and that the United States Marines were never far away."⁴⁵ In Cuba, military power expanded economic control. General Electric also saw the same benefits for expansion in Cuba. Not only were the economic benefits pronounced, they also saw other reasons to expand. Thomas O'Brian stated that "Influenced by 'scientific' racism, corporate reformers operated on the assumption that American corporate culture would improve societies populated by inherently inferior human beings."⁴⁶ Under this logic, not only would they be able to help the economy of Cuba, and line their own pockets, they would also be able to improve the inhabitants of Cuba.

⁴⁴ Thomas R. Winpenny, "Milton S. Hershey Ventures into Cuban Sugar," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 62, no. 4 (Fall 1995): 491.

⁴⁵ Winpenny, "Milton S. Hershey Ventures," 491-492.

⁴⁶ Thomas O'Brian, "The Revolutionary Mission: American Enterprise in Cuba," *The American Historical Review* 98, no. 3 (June 1993): 767.

Just as the political and economic realities evolved, so did the view of Cubans in American popular culture. Under the military rule of General Weyler, Cuba began to be depicted as a distinct entity from Spain. Weyler was seen as a brutal military leader and depictions reflected that. The depictions were not static, however. Before the Spanish American War, Cubans were seen as helpless, weak, and starving. To illustrate this, Cubans were depicted in American newspapers in gendered terms. The depictions of the Cuban people as female are due to the gender norms of the time, and in part, a highly publicized story of an escape from prison by the daughter of a Cuban revolutionary.

Evangelina Cossio Cisneros was the daughter of a Cuban rebel leader. She was imprisoned for sedition and imprisoned in a notorious jail.⁴⁷ She became the poster child for the Cuban cause. She was how many Americans Imagined Cuba. She was a white woman who was, according to Hearst's newspapers, in danger from her male Spanish captors. Americans tried to get her released, particularly those in high society. She did eventually get out of prison by escaping at which point she became an American celebrity. Louis Perez described the event as follows. "The staged rescue of Evangelina from her captors assumed fully the dimension of a morality play, unfolding as a real-life enactment of a popular narrative, a case of life imitating a metaphor. If one Cuban woman could be rescued from Spanish mistreatment, why not all Cuban women –indeed, why not Cuba imagined as a woman?"⁴⁸ The Cuban population as a "damsel in distress" was the image that many Americans were accosted with in the media of the time. In Louis Perez's words, "The island was perceived to be populated by a people ill-fit to govern themselves and ruled by a country ill-equipped to govern anyone else."⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 77.

⁴⁸ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 78.

⁴⁹ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 41.

The United States saw itself as the only nation that was willing to protect the Cuban people. The United States became very active in Cuba while the Cuban independence war was still going on. American non-governmental organizations moved in to help starving Cubans. The United States found itself in a position of moral high ground. When the Ottoman Empire had massacred Armenians within its empire in the later years of the Nineteenth Century, the European powers had done nothing.⁵⁰ They didn't see it as their problem. The United States was able to take solace in the fact that when something similar happened close to its borders, the United States acted to help people.⁵¹ This reasoning became prominent in the American Press. In one political cartoon, a Turkish soldier is shown congratulating a Spanish one for beating their record of barbarity.⁵² In that image both the Turkish soldier, and the Spanish soldier have swords and devil tails. It can reasonably be assumed that the devil tails are there to show their cruelty, and the swords are to show backwardness on the part of the Spanish and Turkish nations. In fact many Americans were proud that they were doing something to help their neighbor. The American Red Cross was mobilized to help the Cubans who had been re-concentrated in the towns and cities (reconcentrados). Food and medicine along with medical practitioners were sent to Cuba.⁵³ The situation in Cuba at the time was very dire for many people. Starvation and disease were killers on a large scale, and the facilities were insufficient for wide scale disease. Americans saw their own willingness to act to help the Cubans (even if it was only humanitarian aid prior to the war), as evidence of a strong moral compulsion on their own part. Americans took pride that this was a quality that they had that, in their views, the European powers lacked.

⁵⁰ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 62.

⁵¹ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 63.

⁵² Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 63.

⁵³ Clara Barton, "Our Work and Observations in Cuba," *The North American Review* 166, no. 498 (May 1898): 553.

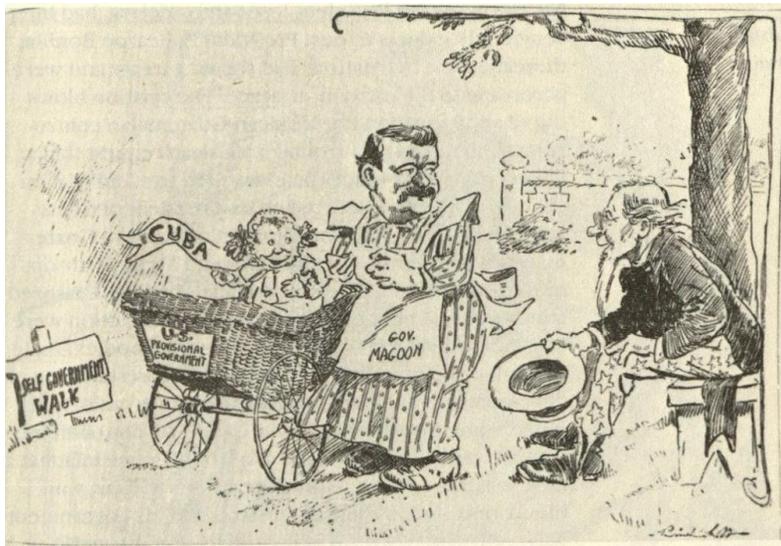
After the Spanish-American War, the United States became an occupying authority in Cuba for a number of years. The United States did not give over control of the country to the Cuban government immediately. It was feared that the Cubans would not be able to effectively govern themselves. This reasoning had a number of factors. Cuba had never been an independent country before, and it had never been a democratic one. Large parts of the country were destroyed from the war, and a large number of people were sick or dying. American leaders at the time believed if things were not done right, there could be any number of bad outcomes. They wanted to control Cuba to ensure that everything went right.

The fears about Cuba being able to govern itself were shown in a number of ways in the American media. The first of these ways was by infantilizing Cuba. The United States believed it had assumed a paternal role in Cuban affairs as a result of the Spanish-American War. Orville Platt said that “The United States, if true to its history and its character, must train up its child in the way it should go, so that when old it will not depart from it.”⁵⁴ The depiction of Cubans as children was one that assumed that they would eventually be allowed to become the masters of their own fate. Children can be controlled by their parents to a certain extent, but eventually they will become adults. The best way to describe the actions of the United States through the view of the time would be as trying to influence the kind of adult Cuba would become. The United States needed a stable and, most of all, a docile Cuba to ensure its own security and to keep the economic activity flowing. Louis Perez stated that “Once Cubans were rendered as children, the proposition that they lacked the experience for self-government assumed plausibility. Indeed the metaphor of Cubans as children made the denial of self-government a matter of incontrovertible

⁵⁴ Platt, “Cuba’s claim,” 146.

common sense, and more; it presented the Americans with the moral obligation to prepare them for adulthood.”⁵⁵

Perez describes the roles of the two parties as they were seen in the United States. He wrote “The condition of childhood- Cuban- implied immaturity, inexperience, and innocence, with a sense of vulnerability and propensity to mischief. The status of adult- North American- implied- implied a moral obligation to nurture children, to educate, to guide, and when necessary, to discipline, often over their very protests, with the self-assurance that the exercise of adult authority was in the best interests of Cubans.”⁵⁶ This bias showed up in business relationships as well. American companies in Cuba, such as the Cuba Company, recommended that Cuban workers needed to be supervised more than American workers.⁵⁷ These depictions became the standard imagery in the political cartoons of the time. The *Cleveland Leader*, a Cleveland area newspaper depicted Cuba in 1908, as an infant in a stroller.⁵⁸



About Ready to Walk

UNCLE SAM: "Say, Maggie, let's see if she can go it alone."
Cleveland Leader, 1908. Reprinted by permission of *The Plain Dealer*, Cleveland.

⁵⁵ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 115.

⁵⁶ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 119.

⁵⁷ Juan C. Santamarina, "The Cuba Company and the Expansion of American Business in Cuba, 1898-1915," *The Business History Review* 74, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 80.

⁵⁸ John J. Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980): 135.

Other publications used similar depictions to show the immaturity of Cuba. The *Minneapolis Journal* in 1902 portrayed Cuba as a loud child that was disturbing the neighborhood. In this case, the neighborhood was the Western Hemisphere. The United States is shown looking on as Cuba is courted by gifts from European powers. The prospect of Cuba entering into the economic orbit of another nation could be seen as nothing short of a disaster for the United States.



Racial depictions were also used by Americans to excuse Cuba's subservience to the United States. One reason why the United States prior to the Civil War opposed Cuban independence was due to the white population of the island being a minority.⁵⁹ America at the time was unwilling to see nations with black majorities as able to govern themselves.⁶⁰ This view was still present by the time of the Spanish-American War. It was a time of the view of the "White man's burden"; the belief that the European Imperial model was for the benefit of the

⁵⁹ Archibald Cary Coolidge, *The United States as a World Power* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 125.

⁶⁰ Archibald Coolidge, *The United States*, 125.

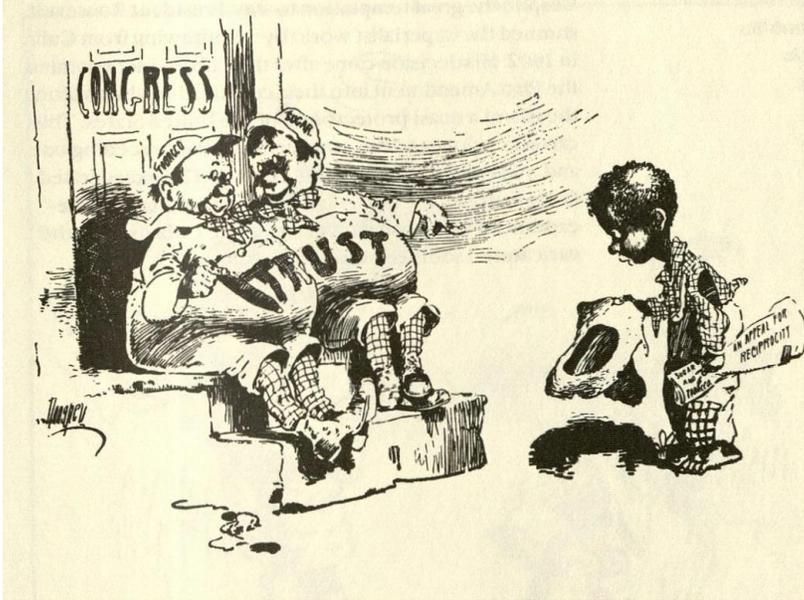
colonized nations. Archibald Coolidge, in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War said that “America was now in a position to take up her share of ‘the white man’s burden,’ with all its incidental advantages.”⁶¹

The representations of Cubans as juvenile and of Cubans as black generally had separate, but often linked meanings. When depicted as white, Cubans could either be children, female, or in some cases depicted as the leader of the country at the time. In the case of depictions of the leadership of Cuba, there were often depicted as being taught as a child would be by either American political leaders, or by Uncle Sam. When Cubans were depicted as black, they were almost always depicted as children. John J. Johnson stated, “Before racism as applied to Blacks fell from intellectual respectability, the cartoonists had cast as Black every Caribbean republic, with the possible exception of Costa Rica.”⁶² Cuba being a Caribbean republic was not immune from this phenomenon. In some cartoons like one done by James Donahey in 1902 for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Cuba was depicted using the stereotypes of the time. John Johnson stated “Its most striking feature, however, is the use of attributed associated with the stereotypical Black from the rural South to portray Cuba...”⁶³

⁶¹ Archibald Coolidge, *The United States*, 177.

⁶² Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature*, 158.

⁶³ Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature*, 166-167.



CUBA: "Pahdon me; but would you ge'mmen move aside so's I could get in?"
James Donahy, *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 1902.

Americans at the time saw two types of Cubans. They saw black Cubans, and white Cubans. The Black Cubans were seen as too numerous, and the white Cubans were seen as too Spanish and too few.⁶⁴ Because of this, many in the United States believed that Cuba had no future other than to become a de-facto possession of the United States. This is because Americans believed that Cubans, both black and white were not able to effectively govern themselves. Senator Zachariah Chandler said "They are one million of the refuse of the earth... They are ignorant, vicious, and priest-ridden... The people are superstitious and vicious; and they are bigots as well."⁶⁵

Although the inhabitants of Cuba were styled in a number of ways, primarily as feminine, or childlike, it is important to note that there was a Cuban population in the United States at the

⁶⁴ Perez, *Cuba in the American Imagination*, 39.

⁶⁵ *Congressional Globe*, February 17, 1859, 35th Congress, 2nd session, vol. 36, pt. 1, pp. 1080-81, quoted in Louis A. Perez Jr, *Cuba In The American Imagination Metaphor and the Imperial Ethos* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 40.

time.⁶⁶ This population was split into two main groups. There were wealthy Cubans who were easily able to find their way into the social circles of the upper class on the east coast, and working class Cubans. The working class Cubans largely found their way to the Tampa and Key West areas of Southern Florida. As American cultural and economic influence grew in Cuba prior to the Spanish-American War, many among the Cuban elites started to send their children to the United States to be educated. According to Lisandro Perez, “As that influence grew during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the United States increasingly became the principal destination of Cuba’s emigrants, many of whom were prominent figures in Cuba’s intellectual, political, and financial circles.”⁶⁷

One of these wealthy Cuban industrialists was Vicente Martinez Ybor. Ybor built a cigar factory near Tampa Florida in 1886 which was situated in Ybor City. Ybor City was close enough to Tampa that it was eventually annexed into the city.⁶⁸ Tampa also had a recently constructed rail connection that provided an outlet for the cigar factory’s production. Cuba at the time was in flux. There was a combination of a poor economy, increasing workforce, and the proximity to the United States.⁶⁹ Because of these factors, many Cubans moved north in search of employment. Both white and black Cubans moved to Ybor for work, and were later joined by Italians in the 1890s.⁷⁰ According to Nancy Mirabal, “When Afro Cubans arrived Ybor City to work in the cigar factories, local laws and customs defined them as black and assigned them to the same legal category as African Americans, despite the difference in language and heritage.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ Lisandro Perez, “Cubans in the United States,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 487 (September 1986): 127.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Gary Mormino, “Tampa’s Splendid Little War: Local History and the Cuban War of Independence,” *OAH Magazine of History* 12, no. 3 (Spring 1998): 37.

⁶⁹ Nancy Rael Mirabal, “The Afro-Cuban Community in Ybor City and Tampa, 1886-1910,” *OAH Magazine of History* 7, no. 4 (Summer 1993): 19.

⁷⁰ Mormino, “Tampa’s Splendid Little War,” 37.

⁷¹ Mirabal, “The Afro-Cuban Community,” 19.

Mirabal goes on to say “Since being both black and Cuban (meaning white) was incompatible with the racial mores of Florida during the Jim Crow era, Afro Cubans created a separate community and a fluid identity which reflected both their cultural heritage and race.”⁷²

According to Gary Mormino, the Cuban enclave of Ybor was a tolerant one, particularly for the south at the time.⁷³ This leads to the conclusion that while the Cuban community saw themselves based on their shared ethnic history; the legal and cultural framework of the Americans in South Florida wanted to divide the immigrant community up based on race. While the official position was on in which the white Cubans were seen as white, the local Anglo-American population saw all the Cubans as inferior to them.⁷⁴ While the cigar factories were not segregated, Tampa was and Afro Cubans had to go there to get education and medical treatment.⁷⁵

The Cuban population in Ybor was pro-independence. They disliked Spanish control of Cuba and wanted it to be ended. Cubans, both black and white gave money to the cause and formed social groups that advocated for Cuban independence. There were over 40 Cuban patriotic clubs that were formed in Tampa.⁷⁶ These organizations were, however, divided by race and gender. In the cigar factories, the work was divided by gender, but not by race. Men rolled cigars, while women steamed the tobacco. Pro-independence books and newspapers were read while the employees worked in the factories. The Cuban population in Tampa was influential enough that Jose Marti went there to raise funds. While in the city, he made a speech that encouraged and urged unity among all Cubans regardless of race.⁷⁷ He wanted to build a

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Mormino, “Tampa’s Splendid Little War,” 37.

⁷⁴ Mirabal, “The Afro-Cuban Community,” 19.

⁷⁵ Mirabal, “The Afro-Cuban Community,” 20.

⁷⁶ Mormino, “Tampa’s Splendid Little War,” 38.

⁷⁷ Mirabal, “The Afro-Cuban Community,” 21.

nation after the war, and a racial divide would complicate that. Marti wanted to use the war to create a united Cuban nation.

The United States wanted to do the same thing with the U.S population. The Spanish-American war was a chance to show that Americans, both Northern and Southern were able to fight alongside each other. When the Spanish-American war was declared, the United States military chose Tampa as the rally point.⁷⁸ Tampa was on the coast, and connected by rail. It was also one of the closest American cities to Cuba. Tampa became a boomtown. Gary Mormino described it as “A city of fifteen thousand prepared for an invasion of sixty-six thousand soldiers of their way to Cuba.”⁷⁹ The war brought massive opportunities to many, wealth to some, and racial tensions to many. The city had a large population of Spaniards who were seen as potential enemies, and the war brought black soldiers who were viewed with contempt by the white American population of the city.⁸⁰

When wealthy Cubans who went north returned to Cuba they brought ties to their wealthy American counterparts back with them and also baseball. Baseball was an American sport that showed up in Cuba at a time when Cubans were trying to be independent both culturally and politically from the Spanish Empire. According to Louis Perez, “The rising popularity of baseball in the United States coincided with the years when Cuban immigration was the greatest, and it centered in many of the cities where the Cuban community was large.”⁸¹ While the island was part of the Spanish Empire politically, it was part of the Americans sphere economically, and increasingly so in terms of culture.⁸² Baseball for Cubans was a way to show

⁷⁸ Mormino, “Tampa’s Splendid Little War,” 39.

⁷⁹ Mormino, “Tampa’s Splendid Little War,” 39.

⁸⁰ Mormino, “Tampa’s Splendid Little War,” 40.

⁸¹ Louis A. Perez Jr, “Between Baseball and Bullfighting: The Quest for Nationality in Cuba, 1868-1898,” *The Journal of American History* 81, no. 2 (September 1994): 499.

⁸² Perez, “Baseball and Bullfighting,” 495-496.

their independence from the Spanish in a nonviolent way and also a way to be modern. The pastimes of Cuba depended on the nationality of the participant. Spanish Immigrants tended to gravitate towards bullfighting, while the Cubans tended to prefer baseball. Louis Perez argues that “baseball sharpened the distinctions between Cubans and Spaniards when those distinctions were increasingly assuming political implications.”⁸³ Baseball arrived in Cuba in the 1860’s. It came back from the United States with Cuban students who had been educated in the United States.⁸⁴ The popularity of the sport exploded. Between the 1870’s and the 1890’s, more than 200 baseball teams were formed across Cuba.⁸⁵

By the 1890s, Cuban teams played American ones in Cuba and in the United States.⁸⁶ This is important because the Cubans were having international contact and the Spanish, their colonial overlords, were not even involved. Cubans enjoyed the sport, but most importantly it was a modern game. Louis Perez wrote “For some the issues were clear. Cubans who traveled to the United States could not help but compare Havana with New York. North America became the frame of reference for many Cubans, and inevitably by this standard of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity,’ Havana came up short.”⁸⁷ Not only was baseball a good sport for exercise, and community, it was also used as a fundraising tool by the Cuban rebels.⁸⁸

In playing baseball, the Cubans were protesting against the Spanish. This was shown through the Cuban views of the two sports. Louis Perez states that “Cubans celebrated the modernity and progress implied in baseball, associated with the United States, and denounced

⁸³ Perez, “Baseball and Bullfighting,” 506.

⁸⁴ Gerald E. Poyo, “Baseball in Key West and Havana, 1885-1905: The Career of Francisco A. Poyo,” *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (Spring 2009): 549.

⁸⁵ Perez, “Baseball and Bullfighting,” 502.

⁸⁶ Poyo, “Baseball in Key West,” 551.

⁸⁷ Perez, “Baseball and Bullfighting,” 495-496.

⁸⁸ Poyo, “Baseball in Key West,” 553.

the inhumanity and backwardness suggested by bullfighting, associated with Spain.”⁸⁹ Jose Marti’s vision of a unified Cuba could be achieved through baseball which in Louis Perez’s words “offered the possibility of national integration of all Cubans, of all classes, black and white, young and old, men and women.”⁹⁰

Cuba’s contributions to their own independence were downplayed in the American historiography of the war. To most Americans, the war was fought and won by the United States. Albert Beveridge wrote “Cuba was not able to expel Spain. Not all the Cuban people wanted Spain expelled. The United States ejected Spanish government from that island.”⁹¹ The narrative that developed was one that caused animosity against the United States by the Cuban population. During the Cuban War of Independence, American correspondents wrote about the situation on the island. The Cuban population was described as both weak and unwilling to fight against tyranny in addition to being ungentlemanly due to their methods of fighting the Spanish.⁹² Crittenden Marriot wrote that “Their willingness to be slaves makes their masters tyrants... Spain would never had dared the abuses that brought about this and all previous rebellions had not the Cubans so invited outrage by their meekness.”⁹³ He attributes this to the race of the Cuban inhabitants and the generations of soft living of Cuba.

Because of their inability to press the war against the Spanish and their lack of fighting spirit, many Americans concluded that they were not entirely fit to govern themselves. Thomas Paterson wrote “The first American biased assumption suggests that the Cubans and Filipinos accomplished little on their own in the quest for independence. Stalemated and faction-ridden,

⁸⁹ Perez, “Baseball and Bullfighting,” 505.

⁹⁰ Perez, “Baseball and Bullfighting,” 506.

⁹¹ Beveridge, “Cuba and Congress,” 541.

⁹² Marriot, “General Weyler’s Campaign,” 385.

⁹³ Marriot, “General Weyler’s Campaign,” 383.

the needed the strong, guiding hand of the United States to help them break from Spain.”⁹⁴ To these individuals, the Cubans were not fighting because of either their insufficient want for freedom, or because they were deemed to not be masculine enough to fight for their freedom and their families. Thomas Paterson stated “A male ethos also held a place in the constellation of American ideas... American leaders often described other nations as effeminate, unable, in contrast to a macho Uncle Sam, to cope with the demands of world politics.”⁹⁵ The United States, in the case of Cuba, traced this perceived lack of masculinity to the race of the inhabitants of the island. Cubans, the concluded were not of the same racial stock as Americans who they were certain would fight against tyranny at any opportunity. The feminine depictions of Cuba prior to the Spanish-American war illustrated the perceived Cuban meekness. Paterson argues that “Cuba was sketched as a damsel in distress, a female figure soon to embrace the strong rescuer, the Yankee.”⁹⁶

Americans were apprehensive of turning over the reins of state to Cubans for that same reason. The logic they used to justify their control of Cuba was the same logic that was used by many European leaders to justify their colonial administrations. They didn’t think the Cuban people were ready for self-government. When writing about the people of South America, Albert Beveridge was not optimistic about their capacity for self-government. He wrote

The character of the people these republics is similar to that of the people of Cuba. Their racial origin is the same. Their history has been the same. Their tutelage under Spanish misrule has been the same. If there is any element of difference, that element is the greater proportion of blacks in Cuba. But history and contemporaneous fact do not justify the belief that this element, left to itself, increases the Cuban capacity for self-government, unaided, unguided and unrestrained.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Thomas G. Paterson, “United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War,” *The History Teacher* 29, no. 3 (May 1996): 341-342.

⁹⁵ Paterson, “United States Intervention in Cuba,” 352.

⁹⁶ Paterson, “United States Intervention in Cuba,” 353.

⁹⁷ Beveridge, “Cuba and Congress,” 548.

They were, however, in a situation in which they could not propose the annexation of the country outright. Cuba independence was guaranteed by the United States through the Teller Amendment which assured both the Cubans and the rest of the world that the United States had no intention of annexing the island.⁹⁸ The solution to this conundrum was the Platt Amendment. The Platt amendment was the brainchild of Senator Orville Platt. Platt was an imperialist who wanted to ensure that the United States had control of the formerly Spanish colonies both in the Pacific, and the Atlantic.⁹⁹ He believed that the United States had the obligation to rule the territories not only because he believed that the United States in freeing them from Spain had the obligation to train them in governance, but also because the United States had no other choices. The United States spend a fortune on the war with Spain, and a number of Americans died. He thought it would be a dishonor for the United States to give control of the territories to another power.¹⁰⁰ His concern, which was shared by others in government, was that if the former Spanish Colonies were not controlled, or supervised, they would become colonies of other nations with imperial aspirations.

The United States also saw economic reasons for intervention. Cuba, like most of Latin-America was seen as a potential market for the United States.¹⁰¹ The United States was one of the larger trading partners with those nations, and the United States was worried of the possibility of those nations leaving the American economic sphere. This worry was even more pronounced in the case of Cuba because of the perceived tactical value of the nation. A hostile nation in close proximity to the United States was considered a strategic nightmare. As a result, the United States pushed for the Platt Amendment to the Cuban Constitution. Through the Platt

⁹⁸ David F. Trask, *The War With Spain in 1898* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1981), 55.

⁹⁹ Trask, *The War With Spain*, 440.

¹⁰⁰ Beveridge, "Cuba and Congress," 543.

¹⁰¹ Paterson, "United States intervention in Cuba," 346.

Amendment, the United States would have a legal justification to intervene when Cuba made actions that it saw as against American interests. This wasn't seen as that problematic because the United States at the time saw its goal in Cuba as the best interests of Cuba.

The U.S interventions in Cuba followed this same logic. The United States intervened in Cuba frequently. One example of this was the intervention of 1906 to 1909. According to the United States, this was caused by the overthrow of the Cuban President, a Tomás Estrada Palma. There were some Opinions as to why the Cubans rebelled. According to David Lockmiller, the Cuban agricultural system was the cause. The schedule of Cuban agriculture was one that caused many farm hands in the sugar industry to become out of work for a time.¹⁰² This resulted in a population that was willing to follow revolutionary movements. The instability caused the government to be overthrown which caused the United States to invoke the Platt amendment. The American occupational authorities used their power to aid farmers and planters.

The American occupational government was run by Charles Magoon.¹⁰³ Magoon increased the amount of roads, and also gave large concessions to American companies.¹⁰⁴ Americans saw this as the benevolent Americans once again helping their Cuban friends. Cubans did not see it in the same way. Palma had been a leader who perpetuated his own power.¹⁰⁵ He used voter fraud to continue his rule in 1905. The election board was even administered by his party. The opposition party left the election in protest because they were left out of the elections. When Palma left power, there was a vacuum that was filled by the U.S Marine Corp.

¹⁰² David A. Lockmiller, "Agriculture in Cuba during the Second United States Intervention, 1906-1909," *Agricultural History* 11, no. 3 (July 1937): 182.

¹⁰³ Lockmiller, "Agriculture in Cuba," 181.

¹⁰⁴ Santamarina, "The Cuba Company," 64.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

When the Spanish-American War ended, the United States saw its actions as benevolent, and in the best interests of humanity.¹⁰⁶ Americans did not see alternative motives in the actions. Because they had spent their own wealth and sent their own citizens to bleed for Cuba, the assumed that Cubans could have no other response but to be thankful. While the Cubans were certainly appreciative that the United States had helped them fight the Spanish, they were also apprehensive.¹⁰⁷ The Cubans were not, in general, supportive of replacing Spanish domination with American control. They wanted to forge their own path ahead. While Americans had assumed, that the Cubans would show their gratitude by giving concessions to the United States and showing deference; that was generally not the case as Americans overstayed their welcome.

The average U.S. citizen was highly supportive of war with Spain. Americans saw themselves as natural supporters of liberty and liberation. Cuba was a European colony in the Americas that was fighting against domination by a European colonial power. This is the goal that Americans believed they were fighting for. The Teller Amendment solidified this view. The Teller Amendment said that the United States had no intention of annexing Cuba. Louis Perez wrote “The notion of a war on behalf of Cuban independence to be waged and won by an explicitly selfless and self-denying United States emerged early as the principle explanatory structure.”¹⁰⁸ In other words, many Americans didn’t imagine any other explanation as to why they would go to war in Cuba. They certainly didn’t think that they would acquire Cuba because the Teller Amendment had promised that they wouldn’t.

The result of the war was a surrender of the Spanish to overwhelming force. The United States was able to overpower the Spanish forces in a number of places. The American forces

¹⁰⁶ Louis A. Perez Jr, “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 357.

¹⁰⁷ Perez, “Incurring a Debt,” 363.

¹⁰⁸ Perez, “Incurring a Debt,” 358

looked down on the Cubans for their inability to defeat the Spanish.¹⁰⁹ Americans saw the Cubans as having failed where the United States had succeeded. This took a large amount of significance later on. Americans believed that if the Cubans were unable to fight for their independence, they would also be unable to govern once they had it.¹¹⁰ “The United States early assumed full credit for the victory over Spain, with none shared with the Cubans. Cubans were excluded from the surrender negotiations, denied participation in the armistice arrangements, and ignored during the peace negotiations.”¹¹¹

Americans expected gratitude and Cubans wanted to have independence. There were two competing views of the same events. During the war, the American Army had relied on the Cuban rebels. Cubans had cleared beaches for American landings and had acted as scouts. Additionally, the Cubans had spent years fighting the Spanish to the point that the Spanish were primarily bottled up in the larger urban areas.¹¹² Many people in the United States, particularly those of prominence, disregarded the Cuban contributions. They saw the United States in a very short period of time fighting and defeating the Spanish. Because of this, they saw themselves as having liberated the Cubans with minimal support from the Cubans.¹¹³ “The North American representation also changed the Cuban relationship to the United States. Cubans were henceforth proclaimed beneficiaries of the generosity of the United States, to whom they owed their deliverance and for which they were expected to be properly grateful.”¹¹⁴ Or as Major James Bell said, “What they want is to see us do the work and themselves reap the fruits.”¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Perez, *The war of 1898*, 83-84.

¹¹⁰ Perez, *Incurring a Debt*, 364.

¹¹¹ Perez, *Incurring a Debt*, 359.

¹¹² Marriot, “General Weyler’s Campaign,” 374.

¹¹³ Perez, *Incurring a Debt*, 362.

¹¹⁴ Perez, *Incurring a Debt*, 359.

¹¹⁵ Francis H. Nichols, “The Cuban Character,” *The Outlook* 62 (June 29, 1899): 710-11. Quoted in Louis A. Perez Jr., “Incurring a Debt of Gratitude: 1898 and the Moral Sources of United States Hegemony in Cuba,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (April 1999): 364.

People in the United States were worried about what would become of Cuba if it was given full independence. Race became prominent in the American depiction of Cubans at the time. Cuban rebels were seen as primarily black, and leaders in the United States were terrified of what would happen to the country if they were in positions of power. The Cuba as a potential Haiti (in their view meaning a failed state), that would damage regional stability. In the eyes of many in the United States, it was necessary to control Cuba to prevent this fate.¹¹⁶ This led to what Louis Perez called “The debt of gratitude.” Cubans had to show their gratitude to the United States to show their national adulthood. Cubans identifying their contributions to the war was not showing proper deference. Louis Perez stated that “The Cuban claim was inadmissible precisely because, drawn to its logical conclusion, it negated the American rationale to rule.”¹¹⁷ If the Cuban claim was correct, the American actions in Cuba could have not been benevolent. Thus, in the U.S mindset, the Cubans had to be wrong.

The People of the United States have always represented themselves as a peaceful people. Americans believed that they would never act in an imperialist manner. They believed that they were different than the European powers that wished to conquer for new territories to exploit.¹¹⁸ Americans believed that they only fought for moral causes, and never out of aggression. They believed it was admirable that they were willing to fight for weaker nations to prevent them from being attacked and invaded by more powerful ones. At the same time, the United States was proud of its lack of foreign colonies.¹¹⁹ The United States was supportive of the independence of the other Spanish colonies in the Americas and by the Spanish-American War, only Cuba and Puerto Rico remained. The United States was generally seen in a very positive light in Europe

¹¹⁶ Beveridge, “Cuba and Congress,” 540.

¹¹⁷ Perez, “Incurring a Debt,” 364.

¹¹⁸ Coolidge, *The United States*, 88-89.

¹¹⁹ Coolidge, *The United States*, 92.

prior to the Spanish-American War. Archibald Coolidge argued that this changed after the Spanish-American War. He said “All this was changed by the Spanish War. Continental Europe, without defending Spanish misgovernment in Cuba, regarded the action of the Americans as brutal aggression against a smaller nation.”¹²⁰ Cuba was not allowed full independence for the same reason Puerto Rico was. Speaking about Puerto Rico, Archibald Coolidge said “If the Cubans are not competent to manage their own affairs, why should their kinsmen be more so?”¹²¹ In saying this he was arguing that both Cuba and Puerto Rico were not fit for self-government.

Cuba has historically been in a unique position compared to the United States. It is a geographically close nation that has been the target of United States expansionism since the infancy of the United States. As time progressed, the United States no longer needed the territory of Cuba but was unwilling to completely let go of the island. As a result, after the Spanish-American War, Cuba became a virtual protectorate of the United States. The duty to protect Cuba from itself was self-imposed by the United States after the Spanish-American War. Cubans didn't believe that it was necessary, but the American leadership did. It has, though the history of the United States been seen as a potential new territory, a market, and as a protégé to be taught and protected from all threats including itself. American views of Cuba took a number of forms although all contained bias. To justify its economic control over Cuba, the United States used the rhetoric and representation of race, culture and gender to control Cuba and ensure it was firmly within the American sphere of influence.

¹²⁰ Coolidge, *The United States*, 131.

¹²¹ Coolidge, *The United States*, 146.

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