

Chapter 21

Acquiring and Managing Global Power

Were U.S. interventions abroad between 1890 and 1917 motivated more by realism or idealism?

21.1 Introduction

On May 1, 1901, the Pan-American Exposition opened in Buffalo, New York. The exposition was designed to highlight the achievements of the nations of the Western Hemisphere. But coming just three years after the Spanish-American War, it also heralded the emergence of the United States as a great power. A Triumphal Bridge served as the entrance to the fair and a symbol of American triumph.

The exposition presented a glowing demonstration of progress at the dawn of the 20th century. It showcased new developments in transportation, agriculture, and industry. It also featured performances of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, which reminded spectators of the vanishing "western frontier." The main attraction was the Electric Tower. Nearly 400 feet high, it was built to celebrate the relatively new invention of electricity. Visitors thrilled when the tower's many thousands of light bulbs blinked on every night, creating a magical atmosphere.

Most of the exhibits focused on advances in the United States. Latin American countries were not as well represented. Nevertheless, the exposition was meant to promote a spirit of cooperation and goodwill between the United States and the other nations of the hemisphere. The fair's logo symbolized this spirit. It showed two young women in the forms of North and South America. Their arms were extended in friendly embrace across Central America.

The exposition did not end on a positive note. On September 5, 1901, President William McKinley visited the fair and gave a speech. The following day, a young anarchist approached the president and shot him twice at point-blank range. McKinley died a week later, and Vice President Theodore Roosevelt assumed office. Under Roosevelt and the next two presidents, William Howard Taft and Woodrow Wilson, the United States embarked on a new era in foreign policy marked by increased intervention in Latin America and other parts of the world.



The Electric Tower was the centerpiece of the Pan-American Exposition, held in Buffalo in the summer of 1901. Dotted with 44,000 light bulbs, the tower cast a dazzling glow at night. Despite its impressive architecture, however, the tower—along with most other buildings at the fair—was not a permanent structure. Built rapidly out of wood, wire, and plaster, many of the buildings began to decay during heavy rains in Buffalo that year.

21.2 Three Presidents, Three Foreign Policies

By going to war with Spain and acquiring overseas possessions, President McKinley had set the stage for a more aggressive foreign policy. The next three presidents—Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson—pursued their own policies. But all three gave the United States an even greater role in world affairs.

Although their foreign policies differed, each president intervened abroad to pursue American goals. Some goals were realist, such as controlling access to foreign resources. Other goals were idealist, such as promoting democracy. In developing foreign policy, the guiding principle for all three presidents was to serve the **national interest**. This is the set of goals—political, economic, military, and cultural—that a nation considers important. Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson carried out foreign policies they believed would advance American interests.

Roosevelt Expands U.S. Involvement Overseas Theodore Roosevelt applied an energetic spirit to foreign policy. He wanted to make the United States a great power that could exert influence around the world. He believed that the country must meet any challenge to its national interest abroad.

Roosevelt once wrote, “I have always been fond of the West African proverb: ‘Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far.’” He believed in working quietly and patiently to achieve goals overseas but using force if necessary. Roosevelt’s strong-arm approach to foreign affairs became known as the **Big Stick Policy**.

In 1904, Roosevelt formalized this policy in a major address to Congress. He reminded his audience that the Monroe Doctrine was designed to prevent European meddling in the Americas. Yet he noted that nearly a century later many countries in the hemisphere were still too weak to defend themselves. He asserted that the United States therefore must use “international police

President Roosevelt believed that the United States should act as an international police force to protect its interests. His Big Stick Policy was designed to bring order and stability to the hemisphere.



The Granger Collection, New York

power" to preserve peace and order in the hemisphere and protect American interests. He claimed that this power would help protect weak nations and was a direct extension of the Monroe Doctrine. For that reason, his statement became known as the **Roosevelt Corollary** to the Monroe Doctrine. A corollary is a proposition that is a logical extension of a principle.

Over the next several decades, the United States intervened repeatedly in Latin America and the Caribbean. It sent troops to suppress unrest and prop up rulers who supported U.S. interests. Roosevelt and his successors claimed that these actions were necessary to promote stability in the region, but many critics saw them as an exercise of imperial power.

Roosevelt also used diplomacy to help bring peace to a foreign region. In 1905, he mediated a conflict between Japan and Russia, which were fighting to control Korea and Manchuria. For his efforts in ending the war, he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906. However, the treaty left both Japan and Russia dissatisfied and resentful of the United States.

Taft Advances U.S. Economic Interests After becoming president in 1909, William Howard Taft continued the main thrust of Roosevelt's foreign policy but shifted to economic goals. His policy, which became known as **Dollar Diplomacy**, was to encourage and protect American trade and investment in Latin America and Asia. Taft believed that a strong economic presence abroad would advance American interests.

Taft claimed that Dollar Diplomacy would limit the use of force overseas. But the United States continued to intervene militarily. In Nicaragua, for example, it supported a revolt that brought a pro-U.S. leader into power in 1911. American banks then provided loans to the new government. The government was corrupt and unpopular, however, and a new revolt broke out in 1912. Taft sent marines to put it down and to protect American business interests. The United States kept troops in Nicaragua almost continuously until 1933.

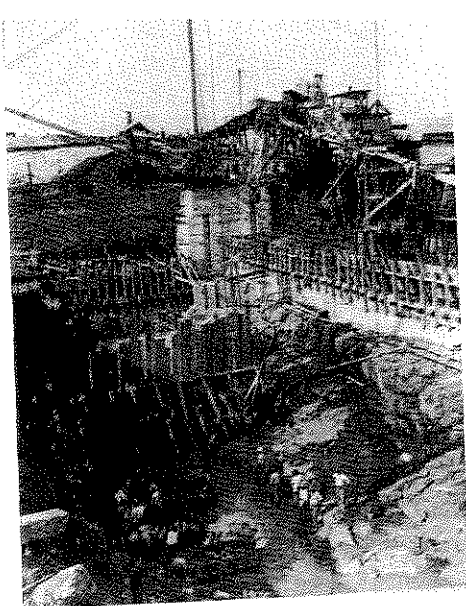
Wilson Champions Democracy Around the Globe When Woodrow Wilson became president in 1913, he tried to take a moral approach to foreign relations. He called this policy **Moral Diplomacy**. It was based on democratic ideals, rather than on economic investment or the use of force. The United States should use its power to aid "the development of constitutional liberty in the world," Wilson said, by basing its foreign policy on "human rights, national integrity, and opportunity, as against national interests."

Wilson also introduced a concept called **self-determination** into American foreign policy. By this he meant the right of other peoples to determine their own government, free of outside influence.

In dealing with the countries of Latin America, Wilson said, "We must prove ourselves their friends and champions upon terms of equality and honor . . . whether it squares with our own interest or not." His principles were tested by more turmoil in Latin America. In 1915, a revolt in Haiti prompted him to send marines to protect American lives and investments. It was not until 1934 that the United States withdrew its troops from Haiti. In 1916, Wilson sent troops to the Dominican Republic, where they stayed for 12 years. Wilson eventually intervened more than either Taft or Roosevelt.



Beginning in the early 1900s, the United States intervened regularly in Latin America and the Caribbean. It sent troops to support friendly rulers and protect U.S. interests. Here, American marines fight antigovernment rebels in Nicaragua in 1912. U.S. forces trained the Nicaraguan army and helped establish a dictatorship that ruled that country for more than 40 years.



The construction of the Panama Canal was an enormous task. Workers toiling in tropical heat had to remove tons of soil and rock and erect massive concrete structures. The three major challenges were cutting through the hills, building a dam to create Gatún Lake, and constructing the locks.

Before the Panama Canal was built, ships traveling between the east and west coasts of the United States had to make the long journey around South America, as shown at the bottom left of this map. The Panama Canal created a shortcut for ships through Central America. The route chosen for the canal took advantage of natural lakes and rivers. Ships traveling by canal from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean move in a southeasterly direction across the Isthmus of Panama.

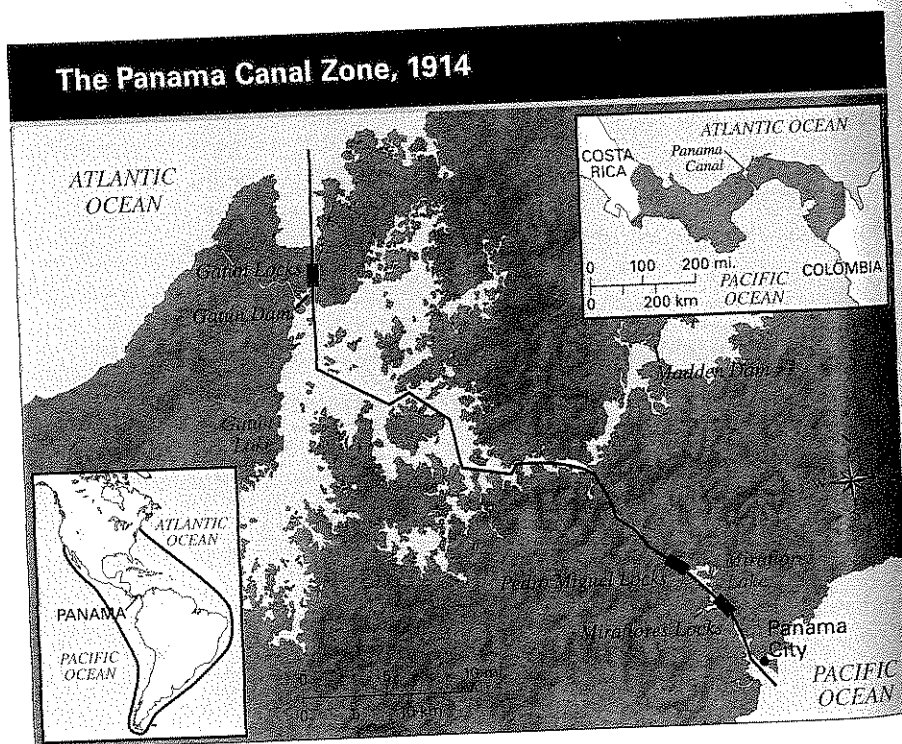
21.3 U.S. Involvement in Latin America

In the early 1900s, Latin America and the Caribbean were a special focus of U.S. foreign policy. The United States viewed this region as its own “back-yard” and therefore a good place to exert its power and influence. In addition to Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, the United States intervened in other Latin American countries, notably Panama, Mexico, and Puerto Rico.

The U.S. Helps Panama Overthrow Colombian Rule The United States became interested in Panama in the mid-1800s. Various nations wanted to build a canal across Central America as a shortcut between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Such a canal would have enormous commercial and military value. During the Spanish-American War, the battleship USS *Oregon* had to travel almost 14,000 miles around the tip of South America to get from California to Cuba. A canal would shorten the journey to just under 5,000 miles.

The narrow isthmus of Panama was part of Colombia. The Roosevelt administration tried to lease land in Panama for a canal, but the Colombian government turned down the offer. In 1903, the United States encouraged a revolt in Panama. Roosevelt sent warships to prevent Colombian troops from intervening. The revolt succeeded, and the United States quickly recognized Panama as an independent nation.

The Panama Canal: An Engineering Feat The new government soon signed a treaty allowing the United States to build the Panama Canal. The 51-mile canal was a marvel of engineering. At least 40,000 workers carved the “Big Ditch” through mountains, rainforests, and swamps. Thousands of workers fell prey to tropical diseases such as malaria and yellow fever. One worker complained that the mosquitoes were so thick “you get a mouthful with every breath.”



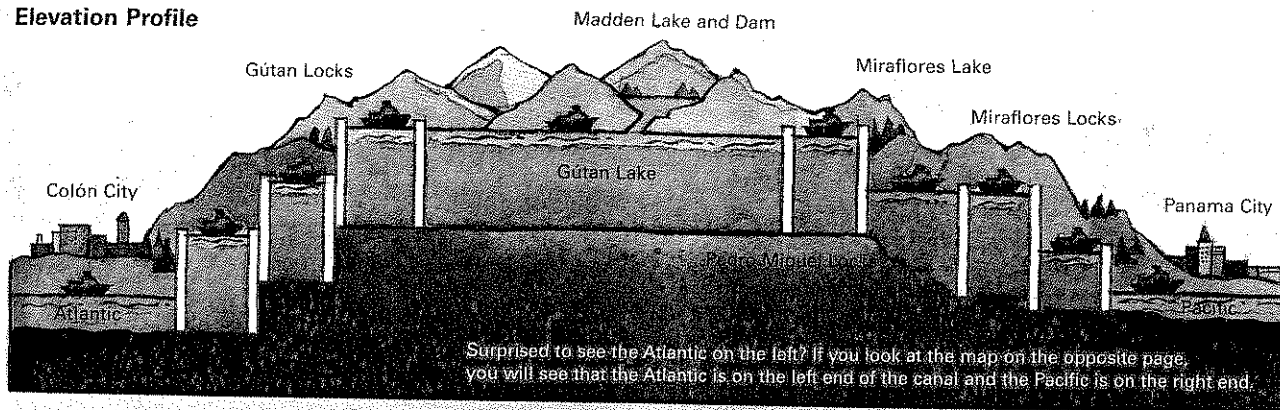
After 10 years of construction, the canal opened to great fanfare on August 15, 1914. Roosevelt called it "the most important action I took in foreign affairs."

Although the canal helped to improve international trade, Roosevelt's actions in Panama angered many Latin Americans. In 1921, the United States tried to undo some of this damage by paying Colombia \$25 million. Colombia's government also had special access to the canal. For most of the 1900s, however, the United States treated the canal as its own property. Not until 1999 did it return control of the canal to Panama.

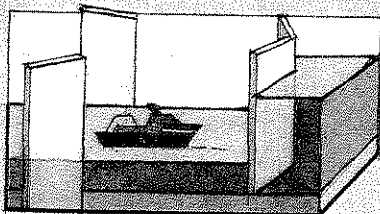
How Does the Panama Canal Work?

The Panama Canal uses a series of locks to lift and lower ships over the Isthmus of Panama. By using the canal, ships sailing between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans avoid an 8,000-mile voyage around South America.

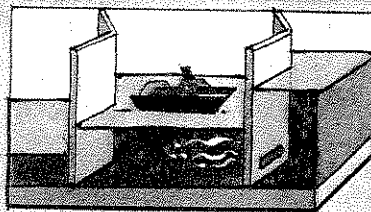
Elevation Profile



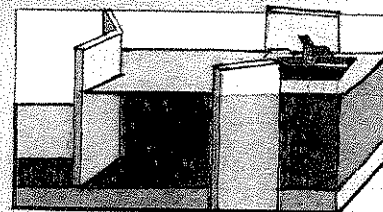
Lifting and Lowering Ships



Once a ship moving up the canal enters a lock, the gates are closed behind it.



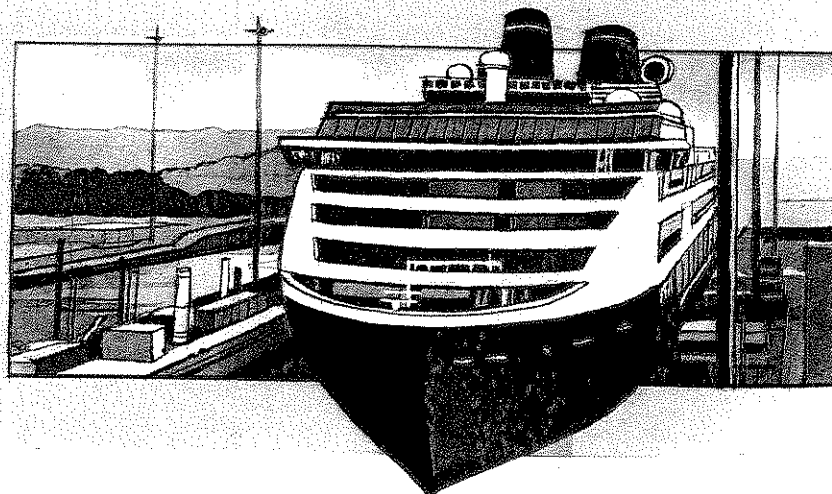
Water is released into the lock to raise the ship to the level of the next lock.



Once the water levels are equal, the gates open and the ship moves to the next lock. This operation is reversed when ships exit the canal.

Fitting Through the Locks

The largest ships that can use the Panama Canal are known as Panamax vessels. Their maximum size is determined by the dimensions of the locks and the depth of the water in the canal. Many modern ships, known as post-Panamax vessels, are too large to use the canal. Examples include supertankers and larger container ships.



PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.—AUGUST 27, 1913.



WOODROW ON TOAST.

BUSINESS WOODROW WILSON, U.S.A. "IF YOU DON'T TAKE CARE, I SHALL HAVE TO TREAT YOU THE SAME WAY AS EUROPE TREATS THE TURK."
MEXICO. "AND HOW'S THAT?"
PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON "WELL, I SHALL HAVE TO—TO GO ON WAGGING MY FINGER AT YOU."

President Wilson tried to support the growth of democracy in Mexico. This 1913 cartoon depicts Wilson scolding Mexico. In the caption, Wilson threatens to keep wagging his finger if Mexico does not behave.

to war. In 1914, Wilson sent troops to Veracruz, a port on the Gulf of Mexico, to keep weapons from reaching Huerta's army. In the battle with Huerta's soldiers in the streets of Veracruz, about 90 Americans and at least 300 Mexicans were killed or wounded. Much to Wilson's surprise, most Mexicans—including Carranza—opposed the U.S. action. Other Latin American countries also criticized the intervention. Wilson hastily pulled the forces out, saying that he was only trying to help Mexico. Several months later, Huerta resigned and Carranza gained power.

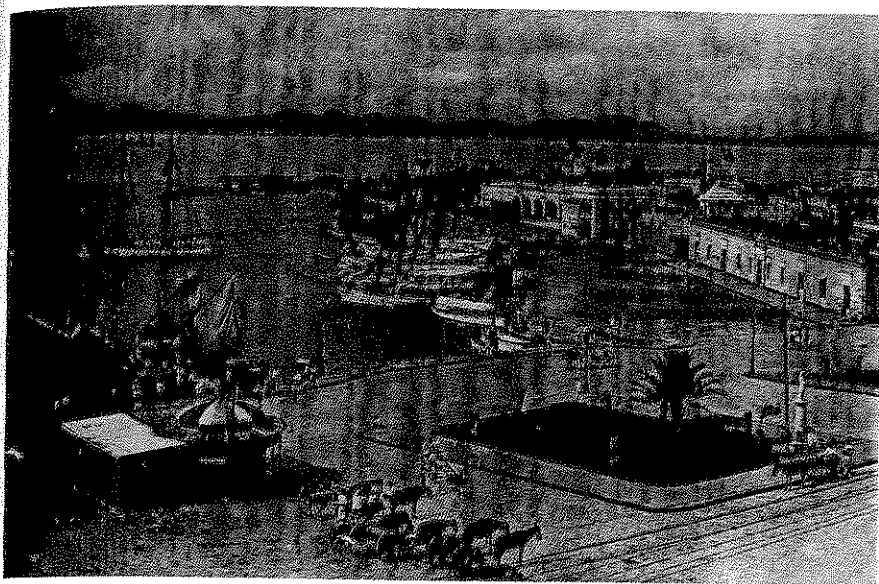
But the Mexican Revolution continued. Two rebel leaders, Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa, rose up against Carranza. Villa, in particular, aroused American concern. Hoping to force a U.S. intervention, he ordered attacks on American citizens in Mexico and the United States. In one cross-border raid in 1916, Villa was responsible for the killing of 17 Americans in New Mexico. Wilson sent troops to capture him, but Villa eluded the American forces, drawing them deeper into Mexico. This military action alarmed the Mexican people, who feared a U.S. invasion. Carranza insisted that the American troops leave. At that point, the United States was nearing entry into World War I. Recognizing the failure of the intervention, Wilson withdrew from Mexico.

U.S. Businesses Invest Heavily in Mexico The United States also played a strong role in Mexico in the early 1900s. Since 1884, the dictator Porfirio Díaz had ruled the country with a heavy hand. Most Mexicans remained poor, while a handful of landowners, businesspeople, and foreign investors grew very rich. Americans were among the chief investors. By 1910, U.S. businesses had invested around \$2 billion in Mexico, buying up land, banks, mines, and other properties.

Revolution was brewing, though. In 1910, Francisco Madero attempted to lead a revolt. Madero failed to gain enough support, but another uprising ousted Díaz in 1911. Madero took power but could not control the country. One of his generals, Victoriano Huerta, overthrew him and had him killed. Other countries then recognized the Huerta government. American business interests wanted President Wilson to do the same. They believed that Huerta would stabilize the country and protect their investments.

Wilson was horrified by Madero's murder, however. He wanted to promote democracy in Mexico and refused to recognize what he called "a government of butchers." Instead, he backed Huerta's chief opponent, General Venustiano Carranza, who he hoped would support democratic reform.

The U.S. Nearly Goes to War with Mexico Tensions between Wilson and the Huerta government almost led



San Juan, the main port and the largest city in Puerto Rico, was nearly 400 years old when the United States occupied the city in 1898. This photograph shows San Juan harbor a few years later, after American rule was established. San Juan has grown enormously since then, though portions of the old Spanish city still remain.

Puerto Rico Remains a U.S. Possession The United States also became deeply involved in Puerto Rico. After the Spanish-American War, it instituted a military government that began to develop Puerto Rico's infrastructure. It set up schools and a postal service. It also built roads and improved sanitation. In 1900, the United States established a civilian government led by an American governor. Puerto Ricans formed political parties and organized a legislature. But the island remained an American possession.

Over the next two decades, Puerto Ricans grew increasingly frustrated with American rule. They were neither U.S. citizens nor an independent nation. The United States recognized Puerto Rico's strategic value in the Caribbean, however, and wanted to maintain control over the island.

In 1917, President Wilson signed the Jones Act, making Puerto Rico a U.S. territory. Puerto Ricans became citizens but were not granted all the rights of citizenship. They could not elect their own governor or vote in U.S. elections.

Puerto Rico's Status Evolves Over time, Puerto Rico became more integrated into the U.S. economy. At first, American investors poured money into sugar production, which became the island's main economic activity. The sugar industry produced great wealth for a small minority but left most Puerto Ricans in poverty. In 1930, the average annual income was just \$122, one fifth of the U.S. average. Later on, Americans would make large investments in manufacturing plants. Still, many Puerto Ricans migrated to the United States. Many moved to the East Coast, seeking opportunity in New York and other cities.

A series of reforms brought political change. In 1948, Puerto Ricans elected their governor for the first time. In 1952, the island became a U.S. commonwealth. This status gave Puerto Rico control over its own laws and finances but left decisions on defense and tariffs in U.S. hands. Although most Puerto Ricans welcomed this change, some wanted more control over their affairs. They argued that the island would be better off as either a U.S. state or an independent nation. In several elections held after 1967, however, voters chose to remain a commonwealth.

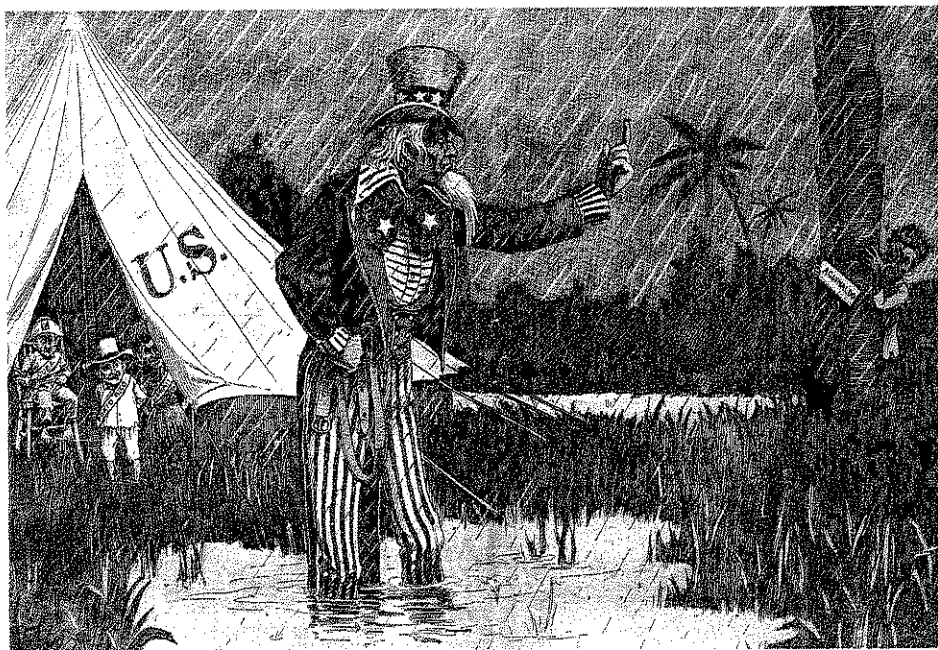
Members of the U.S. Army of Occupation in Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War received a medal for their service. The medal features a Spanish castle on one side and the American eagle on the other.





Emilio Aguinaldo led the Filipino independence struggle. The United States captured him in 1901 and ended the rebellion. He retired to private life and died in 1964.

In this cartoon, Uncle Sam is trying to persuade Filipino rebel leader Emilio Aguinaldo to give up his fight and join Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii inside the U.S. colonial "tent." The original caption read, "Come inside, you young rascal; I'm tired of chasing you around in the wet."



21.4 U.S. Involvement in Asia and the Pacific

After the Spanish-American War, the United States became a colonial power in Asia. Less than 500 miles of open sea separated the American-controlled Philippines from China, the largest country in Asia. By holding on to the Philippines, the United States would have greater access to Chinese trade and more influence in Chinese affairs. The United States wanted to ensure free trade in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Philippines Fight for Independence from the U.S. During the Spanish-American War, the United States captured the Philippines with the help of Filipino leader Emilio Aguinaldo. After the war, Aguinaldo called for independence. He claimed that the United States had promised freedom for the islands.

The United States decided not to grant independence, however. President McKinley believed that the Filipinos were not ready for self-government. He said that he wanted to "uplift and civilize and Christianize" the Filipino people. He also wanted to maintain American control over the islands to prevent another nation from seizing power.

Still, the Filipinos moved ahead with their plans for independence by writing a constitution and electing Aguinaldo president. But the United States refused to recognize the new government. In February 1899, fighting broke out between Filipino and American forces. The United States sent hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the Philippines to put down the revolt. In battle after battle, the Filipino army was defeated.

Aguinaldo then switched to guerrilla tactics, launching quick strikes on American troops. The United States responded with brutal force, destroying villages and herding civilians into prison camps. Mark Twain, one of many Americans who opposed the U.S. policy toward the Philippines, wrote bitterly, "We have pacified . . . the islanders and buried them; destroyed their fields; burned their villages; and turned their widows and orphans out-of-doors . . .

And so . . . we are a World Power."

In 1901, the United States finally captured Aguinaldo. A year later, the fighting was over. The war had lasted more than three years, at great human cost. More than 200,000 Filipinos and about 5,000 Americans had died.

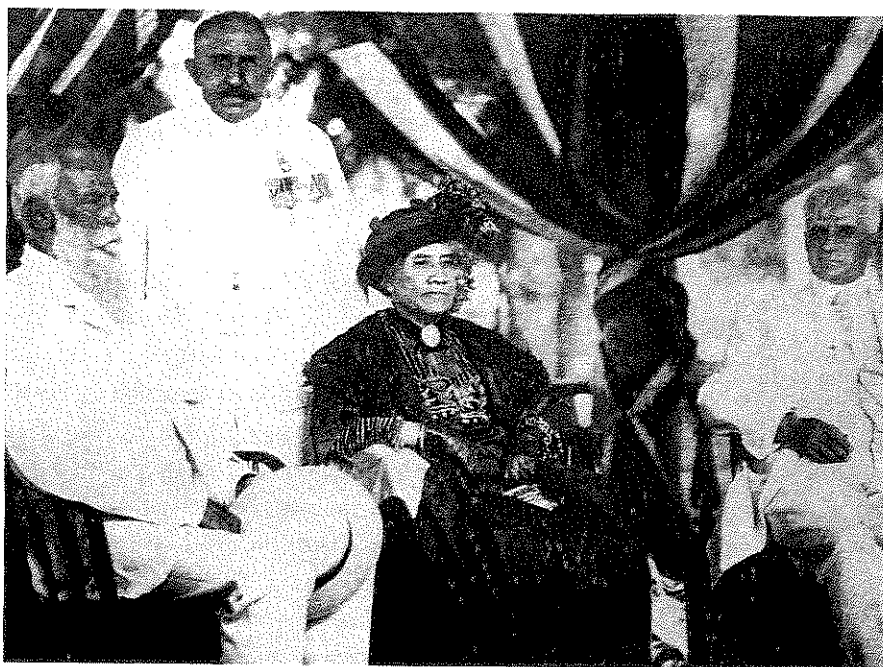
After the war, the United States set up a central government for the islands. The United States built schools and made improvements to Philippine harbors. It also established local governments and encouraged Filipinos to participate in them. The United States controlled the Philippines for the next half-century, finally granting independence on July 4, 1946.

U.S. Businesses Prosper in Hawaii

The Hawaiian Islands had been a focus of American interest long before the Spanish-American War. Known as the "Crossroads of the Pacific," Hawaii was an important stop for ships crossing the Pacific Ocean. In 1820, Protestant missionaries arrived in Hawaii. Within decades most Hawaiians had converted to Christianity.

By the late 1800s, the United States regarded Hawaii as an economic asset. The economy of the islands centered on the export of tropical crops, especially sugarcane and pineapple. White American planters controlled the industry, shipping most of their crops to the United States and becoming wealthy and powerful in the process.

At the time, Hawaii was still a kingdom ruled by a constitutional monarch. In 1891, Liliuokalani became queen of Hawaii. She was a strong leader who resented the dominance of the wealthy white minority on the islands. She established a new constitution that gave more power to native Hawaiians. But a small group of white planters refused to accept the constitution and called on the American government for help. In 1893, U.S. military forces landed and helped the planters overthrow the queen.



Queen Liliuokalani was the last monarch of Hawaii. She was overthrown with U.S. support in 1893 and withdrew from public life. Seated to her left is Sanford B. Dole, the first head of government after Hawaii became a U.S. territory.

The U.S. Annexes the Hawaiian Islands After the revolt, the white planters controlled the government. They applied to Congress for **annexation**, hoping to make Hawaii part of the United States. President Benjamin Harrison agreed to the islands' annexation. Then a new president, Grover Cleveland, assumed office. After discovering the circumstances of the revolt, Cleveland withdrew the annexation treaty and called on the planters to return Queen Liliuokalani to her throne. The planters refused and instead proclaimed Hawaii an independent republic.

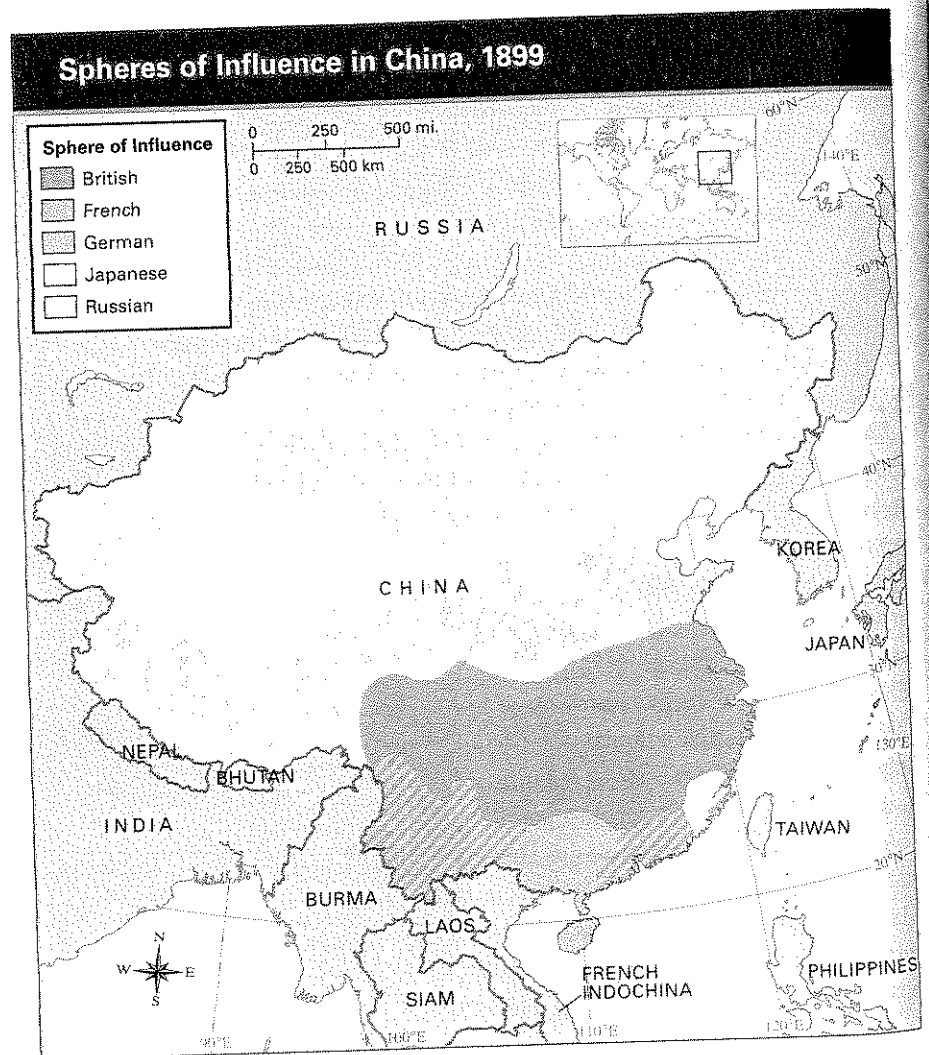
Throughout the 1890s, Americans continued to debate the question of annexing Hawaii. Those in favor stressed the importance of Hawaii's location and the value of controlling the islands. They also hoped to continue spreading Christianity and the American way of life in Hawaii. Those opposed to annexation pointed out that colonization often caused problems. Some feared the introduction of new races and cultures into the United States. Others thought it was un-American to deprive a people of their sovereignty.

The American intervention in Hawaii produced deep resentment among native Hawaiians. Nevertheless, during the Spanish-American War in 1898, Hawaii was annexed as Congress recognized its importance as a port for the navy. Hawaii became a U.S. territory two years later. In 1959, it became a state, the only one that is not part of North America.

U.S. Interest in China In the late 1800s, the United States also focused its attention on China. This huge nation was rich in resources and offered a potentially large market for American goods.

In the 1890s, the United States and other foreign powers watched with interest as China and Japan engaged in a war over Korea. This war revealed that China was neither strong nor stable. Russia, France, and Germany supported China at the war's end and demanded favors in return. These powers, along with Britain and Japan, began to carve out **spheres of influence** from Chinese territory. These were areas in which a single nation controlled trading rights. In some cases, the foreign powers also demanded land for military bases. As a result, much of China was soon carved into pieces of foreign-dominated territory.

The United States wanted to prevent foreign colonization of China in order to maintain its own access to Chinese markets. With this goal in mind, Secretary of State John Hay issued several foreign policy statements, which became known collectively as the **Open Door Policy**. The first statement, in 1899, called on foreign nations to allow free trade in China. Although some foreign powers gave vague replies, Hay boldly announced that the Open Door Policy was "final and definitive."



The U.S. Fights to Keep an Open Door to China The Chinese were deeply ashamed of their nation's weakness. They were proud of their ancient heritage and furious with other countries for controlling China and undermining Chinese traditions. Some Chinese tried to persuade their government to implement reforms so that China could compete in the modern world and resist western influence.

One Chinese group eventually took up arms in an effort to restore national control. This group, called the Righteous and Harmonious Fists, was commonly known as the Boxers. In 1900, the Boxers led an **insurrection**, rising up to try to expel the "foreign devils" from China. The Boxers killed hundreds of foreigners, including Christian missionaries, along with thousands of Chinese Christians. Within a few months, however, the United States, Japan, and European powers had banded together to crush the uprising.

Secretary of State Hay feared that foreign powers would attempt to use the Boxer Rebellion as an excuse to take stronger control over China. He therefore issued a firmer statement of the Open Door Policy, insisting that foreign nations not only allow free trade, but also respect Chinese independence. The other nations did not object, mainly because they did not want to fight each other over China. As a result, China remained open to American trade and influence.



This cartoon emphasizes the success of the Open Door Policy. It portrays the United States as having the power to keep China open to trade with all nations. Uncle Sam's key is labeled "American diplomacy."

Summary

At the start of the 20th century, the United States was an imperialist nation with overseas possessions. Three presidents—Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson—developed foreign policies designed to expand American power and protect American interests.

Roosevelt Corollary President Roosevelt followed the Big Stick Policy in foreign affairs. In 1904, he issued the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. This policy called on the United States to use "international police power" to promote order and security in the Western Hemisphere. The use of force became a key element of foreign policy.

Dollar Diplomacy President Taft's Dollar Diplomacy focused on economic goals overseas. He emphasized the spread of American influence through economic activity. But he also sent troops to protect American interests.

Moral Diplomacy President Wilson favored a moral approach to foreign policy. He wanted to spread democratic ideals overseas. Yet he also used force to uphold American interests.

Latin America The United States became deeply involved in Latin America in the early 1900s. It helped Panama gain independence and built the Panama Canal. It intervened in Mexico. It made Puerto Rico a U.S. possession.

Asia and the Pacific The Philippines became a U.S. possession, and the United States put down an independence movement there. It annexed Hawaii after white planters overthrew the native monarchy. In China, it applied its Open Door Policy to limit foreign control and maintain access to Chinese markets.