

## 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

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



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.

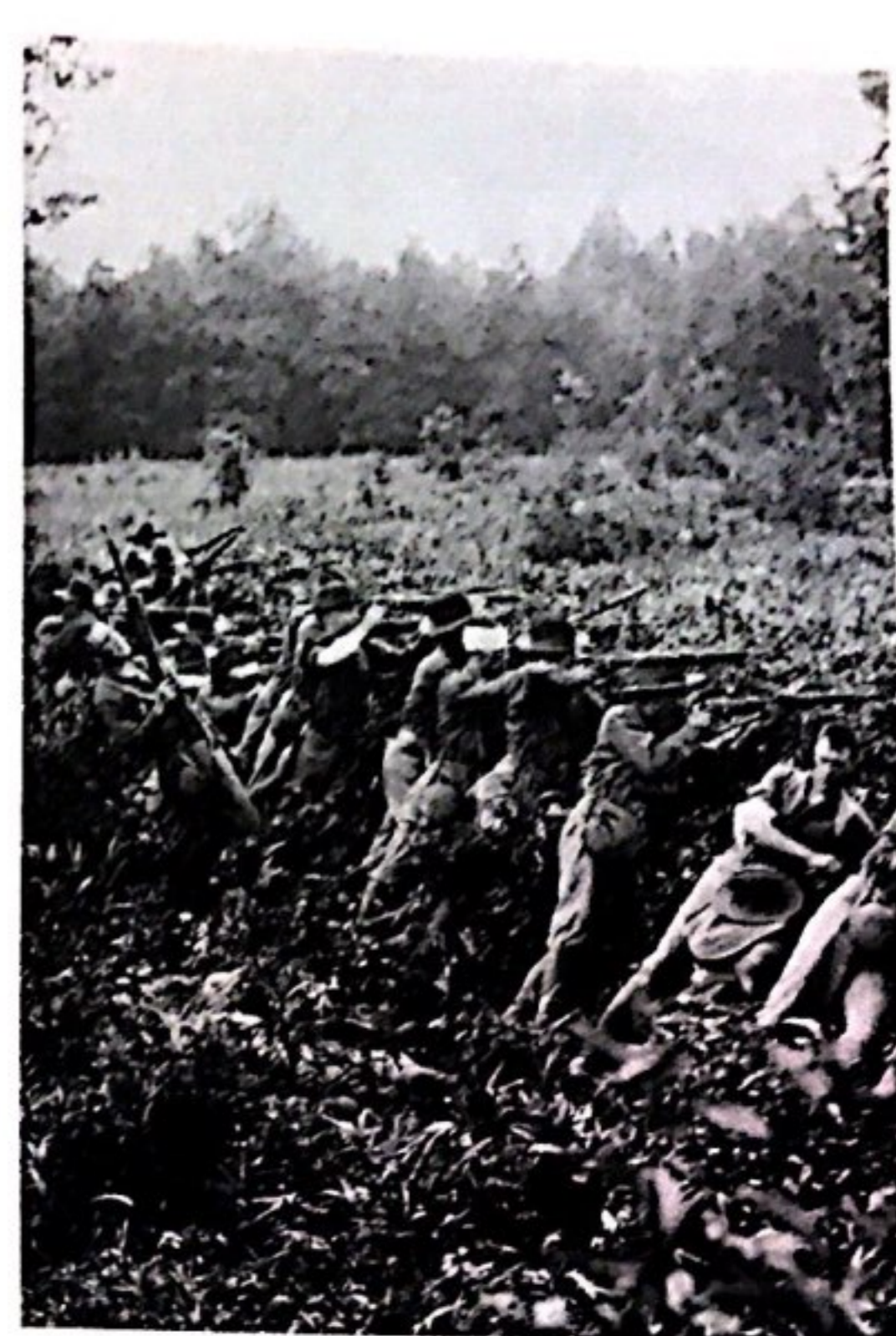
**Taft Advances U.S. Economic Interests** After becoming president in 1909, William Howard Taft continued the main thrust of Roosevelt's foreign policy but shifted to economic goals. His policy, which became known as **Dollar Diplomacy**, was to encourage and protect American trade and investment in 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.