

The Reach of Imperialism 1800-1914

THE STORY MATTERS...

After 1870 the industrialized nations of Europe engaged in an unprecedented competition to acquire overseas colonies. A struggle for economic and military power largely motivated this intense rivalry, which historians refer to as the “new imperialism.” The “Jewel in the Crown” of the vast British Empire was India. The British attempted to dominate every aspect of Indian life, including the culture. One Indian who resisted this cultural imperialism was the Bengali writer Rabindranath Tagore

Lesson 25-4

Imperialism in Latin America

READING HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

whereas sector

Content Vocabulary

dollar diplomacy

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- What are the causes and effects of imperialism?
- How do some groups resist control by others?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

In the course of the nineteenth century, the new nations of Latin America found themselves dependent on the West. The United States was especially prominent in the economic and political affairs of its southern neighbors. Social and political inequalities also continued to characterize many Latin American nations.

The U.S. in Latin America

GUIDING QUESTION *What was the impact of U.S. involvement in Latin America in the early 1900s?*

In the late 1800s, the United States began to intervene in the affairs of its southern neighbors. In 1895 exile Jose Marti returned to Cuba to lead a revolt against Spanish rule. The brutality with which the Spanish crushed the rebellion shocked Americans and began a series of events that led the United States to declare war against Spain in 1898. As a result of the Spanish-American War, Cuba effectively became a protectorate of the United States. By the treaty that ended the war, Puerto Rico was also annexed to the United States. In 1903 President Theodore Roosevelt supported a rebellion that allowed Panama to separate from Colombia and establish a new nation. In return, the United States was granted control of a 10-mile strip of land through the country. There the United States built the Panama Canal which opened in 1914 and was one of the world’s greatest engineering feats of its time. The canal connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. On average, it takes a ship 8 to 10 hours to move through the canal passage. In 1904 President Roosevelt expanded American involvement in Latin America. At the time, European powers threatened to send warships to Santo Domingo in

the Dominican Republic to collect debts owed to them. In a statement that became known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, Roosevelt claimed that the United States could intervene in any Latin American nation guilty of “chronic misconduct” (such as the inability to repay debts). The United States then took control of debt collection in the Dominican Republic.

American investments in Latin America soon expanded. In the early 1900s, the United States began to pursue “**dollar diplomacy**,” extending its influence by investing in Latin American development. The United States soon replaced Europe as the source of loans and investments. Direct U.S. investments reached \$3.5 billion, out of a world total of \$7.5 billion.

As American investments grew, so too did the resolve to protect those investments. U.S. military forces were sent to Cuba, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic to protect American interests. Some expeditions stayed for years.

U.S. Marines were in Haiti from 1915 to 1934 and in Nicaragua from 1912 to 1933. Increasing numbers of Latin Americans began to resent this interference from the “big bully” to the north.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Analyzing Ethical Issues In what ways were U.S. actions in Latin America during the early 1900s imperialist?

Revolution in Mexico

GUIDING QUESTION *What were the causes and effects of the Mexican Revolution?*

After 1870, large landowners in Latin America began to take a more direct interest in national politics and even in governing. In Argentina and Chile, for example, landholding elites controlled the governments. They adopted constitutions similar to those of the United States and European democracies. The ruling elites, however, limited voting rights.

In some countries, large landowners supported dictators who looked out for the interests of the ruling elite.

Porfirio Díaz, who ruled Mexico between 1877 and 1911, created a conservative, centralized government. The army, foreign capitalists, large landowners, and the Catholic Church supported Díaz. All these groups benefited from their alliance with Díaz. However, growing forces for change in Mexico led to a revolution.

During Díaz's dictatorial reign, the wages of workers had declined. Ninety-five percent of the rural population owned no land, whereas about 1,000 families owned almost all of Mexico. A liberal landowner, Francisco Madero, forced Díaz from power in 1911. The door to a wider revolution then opened.

Madero made a valiant effort to handle the revolutionary forces. He put some of the best officials in his administration, and he sought a balance in dealing with foreign interests. However, his efforts proved ineffective.

The northern states were in near anarchy as Pancho Villa's armed masses of bandits swept the countryside. The federal army was full of hard-minded generals who itched to assert their power. Even the liberal politicians and idealists found fault with Madero for not solving all of the country's problems at once.

Francisco Madero's ineffectiveness created a demand for agrarian reform. This new call for reform was led by Emiliano Zapata. Zapata aroused the masses of landless peasants and began to seize and redistribute the estates of wealthy landholders. Although Madero tried to reach an agreement with him for land reforms, Zapata refused to disarm his followers.

Between 1910 and 1920, the Mexican Revolution caused great damage to the Mexican economy. Finally, a new constitution was enacted in 1917. This constitution set down many goals of the revolution. For revolutionary leaders, the goal was political reform. For peasants, it was about land reform. The constitution set up a government led by a president and elected by universal male suffrage. It also created land reform policies, established limits on foreign investors, and set an agenda to help the workers. This agenda included the rights of workers to form unions, set a minimum wage, and limited working hours. Eventually, the revolution helped bring about a more democratic and politically stable Mexico.

The revolution also led to an outpouring of patriotism throughout Mexico. National pride was evident as intellectuals and artists sought to capture what was unique about Mexico with special emphasis on its past.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Identifying Central Issues How did Díaz, Madero, Villa, and Zapata help incite or prolong the Mexican Revolution?

Prosperity and Social Change

GUIDING QUESTION *How did prosperity change Latin America after 1810?*

After 1870, Latin America began an age of prosperity based to a large extent on the export of a few basic items.

These included wheat and beef from Argentina, coffee from Brazil, coffee and bananas from Central America, and sugar and silver from Peru. These foodstuffs and raw materials were largely exchanged for finished goods – textiles, machines, and luxury items – from Europe and the United States.

After 1900, Latin Americans also increased their own industrialization. They built factories to produce textiles, foods, and construction materials. But because the growth of the Latin American economy came mostly from the export of raw materials, Latin America remained economically dependent on Western nations and their foreign investment.

Despite its economic growth, Latin America was still an underdeveloped region of the world. Old patterns still largely prevailed in Latin American societies. Rural elites dominated their estates and their workers. Slavery had been abolished by 1888, but former enslaved people and their descendants were at the bottom of society. The indigenous peoples were still poverty stricken.

One result of the prosperity of increased exports was growth in the middle sectors of Latin American society. Lawyers, merchants, shopkeepers, businesspeople, schoolteachers, professors, bureaucrats, and military officers increased in numbers.

Regardless of the country in which they lived, middle-class Latin Americans shared some common characteristics. They lived in cities and sought education and decent incomes. They also saw the United States as a model, especially in regard to industrialization. The middle class sought liberal reform, not revolution. After they had the right to vote, they generally sided with the landholding elites.

As Latin American export economies boomed, the working class grew. So too did the labor unions, especially after 1914. Radical unions often advocated the use of the general strike as an instrument for change. By and large, the governing elites were able to stifle the political influence of the working class by limiting their right to vote.

The need for industrial workers also led Latin American countries to seek immigrants from Europe. For example, between 1880 and 1914, 3 million Europeans, primarily Italians and Spaniards, settled in Argentina.

As in Europe and the United States, in Latin America industrialization led to urbanization. Buenos Aires (called “the Paris of South America”) had 750,000 inhabitants by 1900 and 2 million by 1914. By that time, 53 percent of Argentina's population lived in cities.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining How did an increase in exports change Latin America after 1870?

THINKING LIKE A *Historian*

Determining Cause and Effect

Historians look for patterns to determine causes and effects of important historical phenomena and events, such as industrialization. As it had earlier in Western Europe and the United States, industrialization caused changes in Latin American societies. Did the process of industrialization have the same effects on Latin American societies as it did on European societies? Use historical analysis skills to answer this question.

REVIEWING VOCABULARY

dollar diplomacy diplomacy that seeks to strengthen the power of a country or effect its purposes in foreign relations by the use of its financial resources