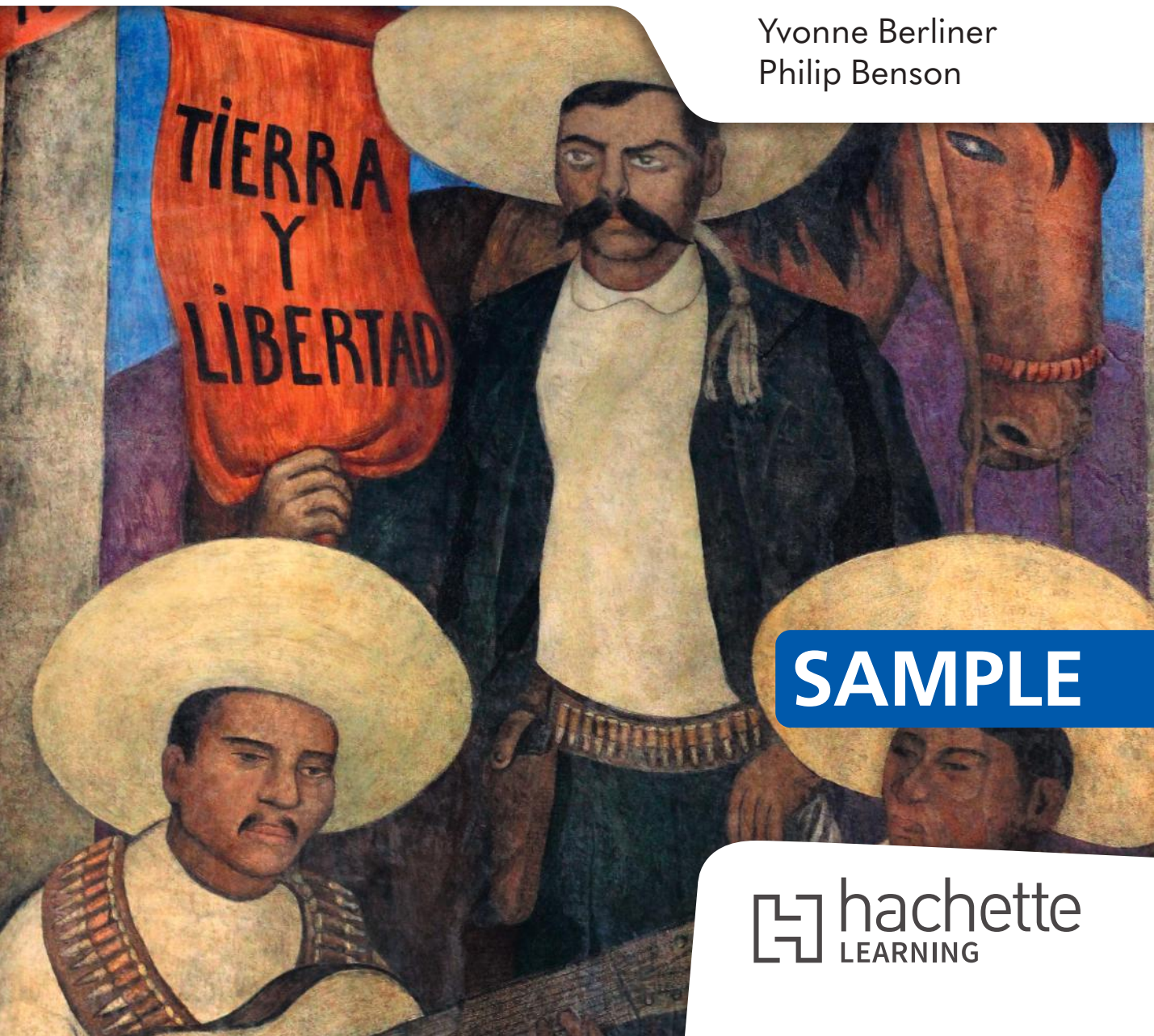


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The Mexican Revolution (1884–1940)

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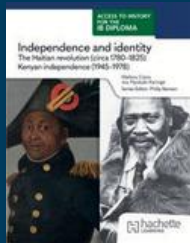
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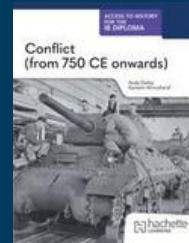
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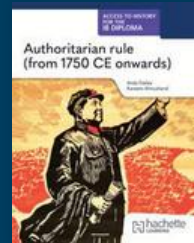
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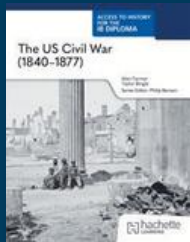
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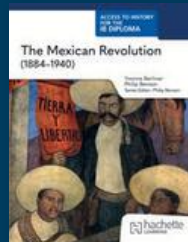
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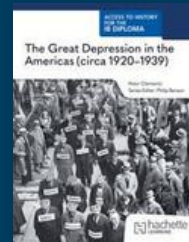
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Philip Benson
Yvonne Berliner
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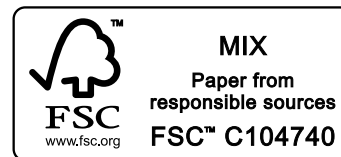
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- Glossary
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International contributions to the revolution

While Mexican society was deeply involved in revolution and civil war, world events proceeded rapidly. During the *Porfiriato*, Europe was taking part in a global armaments race and the increasingly competing imperialism in Africa and Asia. Within Europe, an increasingly intricate alliance system was taking shape. These events would come to a head in the First World War. In the Americas, most countries were more and more wary of US investment, imperialism and intervention. These world events would all have an impact on Mexico. The extent to which international powers were involved in the outbreak and development of the Mexican Revolution is detailed in this chapter.

You need to consider the following questions throughout this chapter:

- ★ What was the extent of European and US economic influence in Mexico prior to 1910?
- ★ How did US presidents and ambassadors react to the Mexican Revolution?
- ★ How did Latin America and the USA intervene in Mexico?
- ★ How did the US government respond to Pancho Villa's raid in New Mexico?
- ★ What effects did the Zimmermann Note have on the Mexican Revolution?
- ★ What caused economic tensions after the 1917 Constitution?

KEY DATES

1904 Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine

1906 Cananea Consolidated Copper Company strike

1909–13 President Taft's Dollar Diplomacy

1911–13 Henry Lane Wilson served as US ambassador to Mexico

1913 Ten Tragic Days

1913–21 President Wilson's Moral Diplomacy

1914 Tampico Affair and US occupation of Veracruz
ABC Powers Conference

1916 Pancho Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico

1917 Zimmerman Note
Mexican Constitution enacted

1918 Carranza Doctrine announced

1 European and US economic influence in Mexico prior to 1910

▶ **Key question:** *What was the extent of European and US economic influence in Mexico prior to 1910?*

From 1876, Porfirio Díaz invited international investment in Mexico because he firmly believed that Mexico needed to modernize, in keeping with the rest of the world. He also believed that a long and steady government was needed to provide the necessary stability for investment and industry to thrive. This attitude was also Díaz's response to the political turmoil experienced by Mexico since independence in 1822: 75 presidents in 55 years, two overseas invasions, the loss of half its territory and one civil war. Under Díaz, Mexico would be a place where US and European investors could make a profit and, at the same time, build a modern infrastructure to ensure Mexican progress.

One of Díaz's first measures was to promote investment in railroad construction. This required negotiation more often than force, as Díaz used local *jefes políticos* to deal with local communities to obtain lands (see page 16), which could then be sold to investors for railroads, mining, agriculture or manufacturing and fund new development projects.

Where did international investors invest and how were they treated?

International investment in Mexico before 1910

The railroads

To attract international investment, it was important to provide modern means of transporting machinery and products to the Atlantic and Pacific ports as well as to the US border. Díaz achieved this by awarding concessions to international investors, while also encouraging national investors. In the 1880s, the first railroad line from Mexico City to El Paso, Texas, was given to US investors, who formed the Mexican Central Railroad Company. This line took four years to complete. By the end of the 1880s, there were many more lines to the Pacific and the Atlantic ports, and British and French investors had joined the Mexican Central Railroad Company.

British and US investment

Although Díaz entered into contracts with Japanese firms in agriculture, mining and the trade of Japanese manufactured goods like porcelain, the majority of international investment was from Britain and the USA. With international investors, Díaz and his advisers were always careful to try

to negotiate the best terms possible for Mexico. This did not always work, as was seen in the negotiation with the British engineering company S Pearson & Son Ltd, founded by Samuel Pearson in 1884. Under Pearson's grandson, Weetman Pearson, the company rebuilt a railroad connecting the Pacific with the Atlantic at the country's narrowest point, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, but only after the government had provided costly infrastructure in a difficult jungle setting. Between 1889 and 1900 alone, Pearson's contracts had a total value of £12.4 million, not only in railroads but also electricity, trams, mining and oil, including the creation of the Mexican Eagle Petroleum Company.

Pearson's political influence

Samuel Pearson also exercised political influence in Britain, as he supported Mexico when the Mexican government applied for banking loans in London. British lenders were pleased that the Mexican government contracted British companies. The Mexican public also preferred British investment to US investment, so Díaz favoured them. In particular, the warm relationship between Samuel Pearson and Díaz led to advantages for Mexico, in providing financial loans for Díaz's modernization projects as well as in international politics. Pearson was influential in the British government, which supported Mexico in border disputes with its southern neighbour, Guatemala. Additionally, Pearson's firm hired influential Mexican politicians or their relatives, including Díaz's own son. Ultimately, this increasingly entangled web of influences served the ageing dictator well in 1911, providing safe conduct to exile.



What does Source A tell you about the clients and sources of finance for the Pearson contracts?

SOURCE A

S Pearson & Son's Construction Contracts in Mexico, 1889–1911, found in 'Pearson and Public Works Construction in Mexico, 1890–1910' by Priscilla Connolly, published in *Business History*, Vol. 41, No. 4, October 1999. Connolly, of British origin, has been teaching at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Azcapotzalco, Mexico City, since the 1970s.

Name of Contract	Date	Client	Nominal Value in Sterling	Value in Pesos	Source of Finance for the Contract
Mexico City Grand Canal drainage	1889–1898	Mexico City Municipality	£2,000,000	\$9,062,000 total value of project 1896–1900 \$18,550,253	Total project 1896–1900: 55% External debt 8% Internal debt 23% Federal Govt. Fiscal revenue 14% Mpal. Fiscal and other revenue
Veracruz Harbour	1895–1903	Mexican Federal Government	£3,000,000	\$30,027,924	Almost all by 'Internal debt' in 5% silver bonds paid direct to Pearson who cashed them with BANAMEX. See below
Veracruz drainage water supply	1901–1903	Veracruz State Government	£400,000	\$3,964,494	Mostly 5% state government bonds paid directly to Pearson who cashed them with BANAMEX
Juile Railway	1896–1900	Vera Cruz (Mexico) Railways Ltd	£100,000	NA	S Pearson & Son Ltd. as owner of Vera Cruz (Mexico) Railways
Alvarado Railway Reconst.	1900	Vera Cruz (Mexico) Railways Ltd	£100,000	NA	S Pearson & Son Ltd. as owner of Vera Cruz (Mexico) Railways
Tehuantepec Railway	1896–1906	Mexican Federal Government	£2,500,000	ND	Partly in Silver Bonds
Coatzacoalcos port works	1896–1909	Mexican Federal Government	£1,400,000	\$21,751,344	External Debt: \$20,532,153 from the 1904 4% Gold Debt
Selina Cruz port works	1899–1907	Mexican Federal Government	£3,300,000	\$24,983,400	Internal Debt, c. \$26,000 in 5% Silver Bonds, paid to Pearson who cashed them with BANAMEX
Selina Cruz and Coatzacoalcos drainage and water supply	1905–1907	Mexican Federal and Veracruz State Governments	£385,000	Coatzacoalcos \$676,115 (Salina Cruz was more)	Internal debt: Salina Cruz, probably by 5% Silver Bonds. Coatzacoalcos water and drainage by 5% state government bonds
Mazatlán Drainage	1906–1908	Sinaloa State Government	£60,000	ND	State government 5% bonds
Minatitlán Railway	1906	'El Águila SA'	£15,000	NA	S Pearson & Son Ltd as owner of 'El Águila'
Río Conchos Irrigation	1909	Mexican Power Co.	£850,000	NA	Mexican Northern Power Ltd*

Note: The Mexican Northern Power Ltd was formed to combine WD Pearson's Mexican electricity companies with the Canadian Electricity companies in Mexico, controlled by the American Dr FS Pearson.

Types of investment

Other international investors in railroad construction, like the US contractor Thomas Braniff, negotiated special deals with the Díaz Government. Braniff included a profitable side business transporting **duty-free** goods from Veracruz to Mexican interior cities.

Some investors, particularly from France and the USA, concentrated on building contracts where they became suppliers of machinery or services once the project was completed; for example, when irrigation canals were required for agriculture, a US company with experience in canals was preferred. This was appealing to the investor, who could then provide continuing service for the canals built. Indeed, after finishing the Tehuantepec railroad, Pearson ran it at a profit as a partner of the Mexican government. This was because the Mexican government over the years wanted to own the railroads or port facilities, so slowly bought the majority of the shares in these companies.

Mining and oil

Once transportation and modern ports were functioning, investors could both export and import products. To encourage the export of Mexican minerals, in 1884 Díaz and his advisers passed a new mining code in favour of making mineral rights more attractive to international investors. (The 1917 Constitution (see page 54) would later reaffirm the Spanish colonial law that gave possession of subsoil to the state.) Taxes were also kept low for extracting some minerals and dispensed with entirely for other minerals. The effect was exactly what Díaz wanted: an increase in new mining ventures by international investors.

Investment in minerals

These investors could import modern technology and machinery for mineral extraction and refinement, with tax advantages. This led to major development in northern Mexico, especially in Coahuila and Sonora. One mixed German–French owned copper mine in Baja California was particularly lucrative for its owners. Other minerals were also profitable: gold production rose from 1.5 million pesos in 1877 to 40 million pesos by 1908, and silver from 24.8 million pesos in 1877 to 85 million pesos by 1908. The largest investor was the owner of a huge mining **conglomerate**, the Guggenheim family from the USA, now of art-museum fame.

Another lucrative copper mine was owned by the US Cananea Consolidated Copper Company, which was the site of a major miners' strike in 1906 (see page 36).

Investment in oil

Oil exploitation became a worthwhile investment in the early 1900s, as more and more fuel was needed for machinery and transport, including automobiles. Díaz was especially adept at playing off British, US and Dutch investors in this field. The US-owned Mexican Petroleum

KEY TERM

Duty-free Manufactured goods, usually luxury consumer goods made overseas, sold without customs duties in order to encourage consumption.

KEY TERM

Conglomerate A series of small companies owned by a large corporation.

Company was one of the first to extract oil around the Gulf of Mexico locality of Tampico. Pearson's British company also invested heavily in Mexican oil fields, having discovered oil while building the Tehuantepec railway (see page 155). Later, Pearson owned oil fields in other areas under the El Águila Company. Together with the Mexican Petroleum Company, these two companies became dominant. Mexico was soon among those countries producing most of the oil in the world in 1910.

Industry

Mexican workers

The border area between the USA and Mexico had always harboured mixed populations of American–English, American–Mexican and Mexican peoples. These last were usually migrant workers, working for US landowners on cattle ranches and farms, such as cotton fields in Texas. These were known as **braceros**. Historian Alan Knight notes that their numbers are impossible to establish, as most crossed the border back and forth illegally.

In 1907, when a series of droughts and crop failures caused a recession in Mexico, many migrants went to work in the USA. By 1910, when the Mexican economy recovered right before the revolution, many returned. Throughout the revolution, Mexican workers crossed the border to work as needed in agricultural and mining enterprises on US territory. They also inevitably suffered persecution in times of tense US–Mexican relations (see page 36).

Industrial growth

Mexico under Díaz imported most of its manufactured goods, but the Díaz regime also stimulated industrial growth. One way was to centre the iron and steel industry in the city of Monterrey. By 1911, this industry, the *Compañía Fundidora de Fierro y Acero de Monterrey* (the Monterrey Iron and Steel Foundry), was producing over 60,000 tons of steel a year.

Other growing industries during the *Porfiriato* included glass, bottles, beer breweries, rubber, sisal, cement and textiles. Many were owned internationally. Industry overall grew by more than 60% between 1891 and 1912. Improved transportation and port facilities built by international investors helped to commercialize industrial products, for both domestic and international markets. These included steel rails, beer, glass bottles, cement, explosives, cigars and cigarettes, soap, bricks, tiles and furniture. This caused international trade to increase tenfold by the end of the *Porfiriato*. The visibility of international investors, and that most of their profits did not benefit the country, became increasingly irritating to Mexicans.



KEY TERM

Braceros Literally, those who work with the physical strength of their arms, in farm and cattle ranch work.

The influence of the USA

A growing influence

During the *Porfiriato*, the close proximity of the USA caused its influence in Mexico to loom large in the consciousness of Mexicans. The Mexican province of Texas had seceded from Mexico in 1836 and was annexed to the USA in 1845. The US–Mexican War (1846–48) culminated in Mexico losing half of its territory to the USA. Mexicans had not forgotten this. Aware of his people’s perception, Díaz continually made offers to European investors to counteract US economic influence. US companies investing in Mexico were increasingly part of large trusts, although the US government launched a campaign to break up these large conglomerates in 1898. Still, US companies wielded great influence in political affairs.

Although, as we will see, the border between Mexico and the USA provided a road for revolutionaries to organize and purchase arms (see pages 56–57), growing US influence carried with it possible threats to Mexican sovereignty as well. Since 1898, the USA had pursued the **‘Big Stick’ Policy** in the Caribbean and Central America. For this reason, the USA intervened in the following countries in the early 20th century: Panama, the Dominican Republic and Honduras in 1903 and Nicaragua 1909–13. After Díaz’s reign, this list would also include Mexico.

Beyond the Americas

European countries were becoming increasingly belligerent in the areas of naval rivalry, imperial colonies and alliances. Mexico was in a strategic location, directly south of the USA; it had oil as a valuable resource, and had Atlantic and Pacific coastlines. Therefore, it was of great interest to world powers.

Effects of the Creelman interview

As seen in Chapter 1 (pages 20–21), Díaz gave a rare interview to US journalist John Creelman. British historian Alan Knight suggests that Díaz conceded the interview to a well-known journalist, from a popular US magazine with wide readership, to assure international investors of Mexican stability. There are certainly many details in Source B that seem to advertise Mexico’s stable investment climate.

What were the reasons for anti-USA feelings in Mexico?

KEY TERM

‘Big Stick’ Policy Also known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, this 1904 assertive policy justified US military intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean.

What were the effects of the Creelman interview?



How does Source B encourage international investment in Mexico?

SOURCE B

Excerpt from 'President Díaz: Hero of the Americas' by James Creelman, in *Pearson's Magazine*, 1908. Creelman was a Canadian-born, US journalist sent to Mexico to interview Díaz in 1908.

I [Creelman] have been privately assured by the principal American [US] officers and investors of the larger lines that railway enterprises in Mexico are encouraged, dealt with on their merits and are wholly free from blackmail, direct or indirect. [...]

More than \$1,200,000,000 of foreign capital has been invested in Mexico since President Díaz put system and stability into the nation. Capital for railways, mines, factories and plantations has been pouring in at the rate of \$200,000,000 a year. In six months the Government sold more than a million acres of land.

In spite of what has already been done, there is still room for the investment of billions of dollars in the mines and industries of the Republic. Americans [US citizens] and other foreigners interested in mines, real estate, factories, railways and other enterprises have privately assured me, not once, but many times, that, under Díaz, conditions for investment in Mexico are fairer and quite as reliable as in the most highly developed European countries. The President declares that these conditions will continue after his death or retirement.

Historian Alan Knight says that this interview cannot be taken at face value, and in fact most assertions made by Díaz were denied in the following months and years. Historians agree that by far the most important effect of the interview was political.

Railroad construction:

'negotiated' lands from peasants and communities using *jefes políticos*

- 1880s: the first railroad line from Mexico City to El Paso, Texas, USA was given to US investors, who formed the Mexican Central Railroad Company
- End of the 1880s: many more lines to the Pacific and Atlantic ports

British and US investment

- British: between 1889 and 1900 alone, Pearson's contracts had a total value of £12.4 million, not only in railroads but also electricity, trams, mining and oil
- Samuel Pearson also garnered political influence in Britain on behalf of Mexico
- The Mexican public preferred British investment to US investment
- In particular, Mexicans had not forgotten the US–Mexican War, 1846–48
- Growing US influence carried with it possible threats to Mexican sovereignty ('Big Stick' Policy)

European and US economic influence in Mexico prior to 1910

- Díaz invited international investment to modernize Mexico
- Creelman interview 1908 – main purpose to advertise Mexico's stability
- Mexico also attractive as:
 - in strategic location
 - directly south of the USA
 - had oil
 - had Atlantic and Pacific coastlines

Industry

- Mexican workers (*braceros*): most crossed the US–Mexico border back and forth illegally; they worked in agriculture and the mines
- By 1911, the *Compañía Fundidora de Fierro y Acero de Monterrey* (the Monterrey Iron and Steel Foundry) was producing over 60,000 tons of steel a year
- Industry overall grew by more than 60% between 1891 and 1912; improved transportation and port facilities built by international investors helped to commercialize industrial products, for both domestic and international markets
- International trade increased tenfold by the end of the Porfiriato

Mining and oil

- Once transportation and modern ports were functioning, investors could both export and import products
- New mining code and low taxes to attract international investors:
 - mining (minerals): major development in northern Mexico, especially in Coahuila and Sonora
 - oil: US-owned Mexican Petroleum Company and British-owned company Pearson dominated; Mexico soon among those countries producing most of the oil in the world in 1910

SUMMARY DIAGRAM

European and US economic influence in Mexico prior to 1910

KEY FIGURE

Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) based his Latin American policies as president of the USA on his 'moral diplomacy', which tried to support democratic governments. However, his frequent military interventions in the region led to greater opposition to the USA.

How did President Taft react to events in Mexico?

KEY TERMS

Dollar Diplomacy President Taft added this US foreign policy to the 'Big Stick' Policy. It aimed to protect US business interests in overseas countries.

Isolationism US foreign policy during 1919–39 whereby the USA chose not to get involved in world events.

KEY FIGURE

William Taft (1857–1930) served as US president from 1909 to 1913. His foreign policy aimed to replace European loans with US investments. He endeavoured to do this peacefully by what he termed 'substituting dollars for bullets', unlike President Roosevelt's 'Big Stick' Diplomacy. The policy was generally considered a failure because it led to much Latin American resentment.

2 The US government and the Mexican Revolution, 1910–13

► **Key question:** How did US presidents and ambassadors react to the Mexican Revolution?

US government foreign policies, namely the 'Big Stick' Policy, **Dollar Diplomacy**, President Wilson's teaching Latin American nations about democracy and finally **isolationism**, all had considerable impact on the Mexican Revolution. US presidents and ambassadors had different degrees of involvement and intervention in Mexican affairs.

US President William Taft

The US–Mexico political relationship

At the beginning of his US presidency in 1909, President Taft met with Díaz at the border in El Paso, Texas. The presidents pledged continued relations and prosperity for the two nations. Taft, however, became increasingly annoyed with Díaz's navy base contract for Japan in Baja, California, and his preference for European investment. When Díaz persisted in exercising Mexico's prerogative as a sovereign nation, Taft openly welcomed Mexican politicians exiled from Mexico on US territory. At the same time, Taft basically approved of Díaz's strong control of Mexico, which protected international investment in general and US investment in particular.

Francisco Madero was given asylum in the USA when persecuted by Díaz in 1910 (see page 46). Once Madero became president a year later, at first Taft enthusiastically supported him. As it became apparent that Madero was losing control of the *zapatistas* and rebelling peasants in Morelos, Taft then moved 34,000 troops to the border and US ships to Mexican ports. US investors also feared attacks on US property in northern Mexico. Taft spoke to Congress in 1912, insisting that US economic interests abroad in general, and in Mexico in particular, needed to be protected. This fuelled the Mexican fear of US intervention and anti-US demonstrations in Mexico City.

Clearly, Taft's opinion of Díaz was ambivalent. Taft mixed high-minded ideals, like providing political asylum to Mexican politicians when Díaz persecuted them, with protecting US economic interests (he was under pressure from US corporations and mining and oil companies, who wanted their investments protected by Díaz's strong control). Taft's opinion of Díaz was probably more favourable than not, as he held a conservative view of the importance of protecting business investments at home and abroad.



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