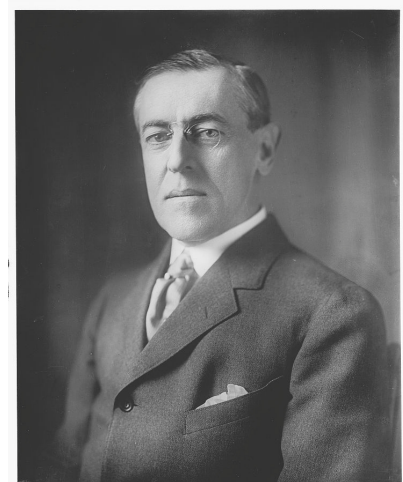


THE U.S. OCCUPATION OF HAITI: CONTEXT



The United States has long had an interest in Haiti, although it did not recognize Haiti as an independent nation until 1862. By 1789, Haiti produced more wealth than the 13 American colonies combined, piquing the interest of U.S. leaders for decades to come. President Andrew Jackson desired to annex Hispaniola in 1868, Secretary of State James Blaine unsuccessfully attempted to take a Haitian naval port in 1889, and President Taft attempted to loan money to Haiti in 1910. Overall, the U.S. wanted to retain influence over the island of Hispaniola by preventing European nations from intervening in the Western Hemisphere for economic reasons, as stated in the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.

In his inaugural address, President Wilson stated, "It would be an irony of fate in my administration had to deal chiefly with foreign affairs." Undoubtedly, irony soon emerged with the U.S. involvement in World War I and Latin America. During his campaign, Wilson proposed a change from dollar diplomacy - the economic support of nations - to moral diplomacy - the economic support to a country whose beliefs are analogous to the other.



In 1913, Wilson announced, "One of the chief objectives of my administration will be to cultivate the friendship and deserve the confidence of our sister republics of Central and South America." Despite these goals, the actions of the U.S. created a paradox between words and deeds. President Wilson's administration intervened in numerous Latin American countries, including Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Panama, Honduras, and Mexico, as part of a larger plan to instill democracy in nations around the world.

Haiti was a large part of this plan. On July 28, 1915 - hours after the assassination of Haitian President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam - President Wilson sent hundreds of Marines to Haiti, marking the start of the U.S. occupation that would last until 1934.

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