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Latin America since Independence

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and Change

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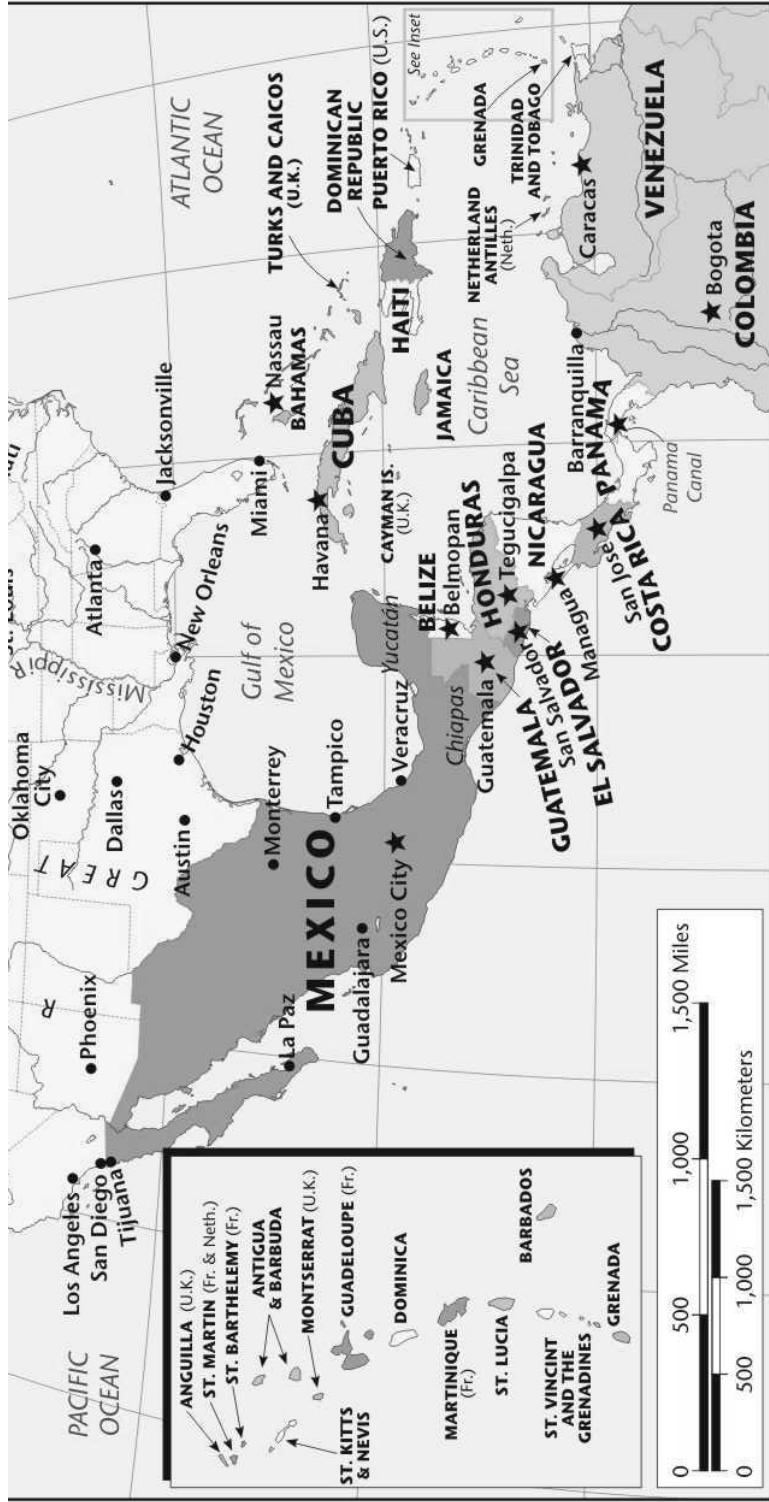
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Acronyms

ALBA	Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (Venezuela)
APRA	American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (Peru)
CDR	Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (Cuba)
CELS	Center for Legal and Social Studies (Argentina)
CGT	General Confederation of Workers (Argentina)
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (United States)
COMIBOL	Bolivian Mining Corporation
CONAIE	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador
CROM	Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers
CTM	Confederation of Mexican Workers
DINA	Directorate of National Intelligence (Chile)
DRE	Student Revolutionary Directorate (Cuba)
EZLN	Zapatista National Liberation Army (Mexico)
FAR	Rebel Armed Forces (Guatemala)
FMLN	Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (El Salvador)
FSLN	Sandinista National Liberation Front (Nicaragua)

GDP	gross domestic product
IAPI	Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Trade
IPC	International Petroleum Company (Peru)
ISI	import-substituting industrialization
M-26-7	26 th of July Movement (Cuba)
MIR	Movement of the Revolutionary Left (Chile)
MNR	National Revolutionary Movement (Bolivia)
OAS	Organization of American States
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries
PEMEX	Mexican Petroleum Corporation
PNR	National Revolutionary Party (Mexico)
PRI	Party of the Institutionalized Revolution (Mexico)
PRM	Party of the Mexican Revolution
PSP	Popular Socialist Party (Cuba)
UDEL	Democratic Liberation Union (Nicaragua)
UFCO	United Fruit Company
UN	United Nations
UP	Popular Unity (Chile)
URNG	Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (same as Soviet Union)



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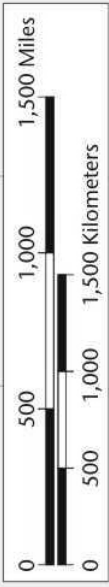
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GRENADA





Introduction

This book offers new perspectives on Latin American history by tracing continuity and change in important colonial legacies through two hundred years of postcolonial history. Geographically, it includes all the countries in the Western Hemisphere that Spain and Portugal colonized, from the U.S.–Mexico border to the southern tip of South America plus Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. As it is customary to consider the former French colony of Haiti, which was originally Spanish, as part of Latin America, it is covered as well. Chronologically, the book begins with background to the initial contact between Spaniards and Native Americans in 1492 and then examines the three-plus centuries of European colonial rule. Its primary focus is the period from 1804, when the first Latin American country secured its independence from European rule, to the present.

During Latin America's colonial period, many cultural traits, attitudes, values, practices, and institutions were formed and persist today in modified form. Five of these colonial legacies have been at the center of political life since independence. These include

- authoritarian governance, as exercised by the European monarchies that conquered and settled the region
- a rigid social hierarchy that the conquerors molded, based on race, color, gender, and until the abolition of slavery, degree of freedom
- a powerful Roman Catholic Church that monopolized formal religion
- economic dependency, an arrangement by which the European countries set the rules of production and trade for the colonies, to benefit the homelands
- the large landed estate that dominated the countryside, which conquerors and their descendants created out of land mostly appropriated from the Indians.

Chapter 1 examines the origins of these five important colonial legacies. The remaining eleven chapters interpret Latin America's history since independence by analyzing continuity and change in those legacies. Over the past two centuries, progressives have sought to modify or abolish them, while conservatives for the most part have sought to preserve them. Different legacies have been important political issues at different times. For example, the status of the Roman Catholic Church was passionately contested during the half-century following independence, the large landed estate first arose as a political matter in early twentieth-century Mexico, and economic dependency became an important matter at the time of the Great Depression in the 1930s. The outcomes of this political contestation over the colonial legacies have been central to molding today's Latin America.

By examining change and continuity in the colonial legacies over time, the book analyzes Latin America's political, economic, social, and religious history and aspects of its cultural history. In covering the broad sweep of Latin American history, it also provides a framework for further exploration. If this story awakens your interest in the history of a particular country, you will find that books are available on every country. If you care to learn more about popular culture, women, art, sports, cinema, the environment, music, sexuality, folklore, wars, or almost any other aspect of historic or contemporary Latin America, you will find books on those topics, too.

The book is organized chronologically and divided into six parts and twelve chapters. At the end of Parts II–VI, brief essays labeled “Reflections on the Colonial Legacies” assess the state of the colonial legacies at different times between independence and the present. The conclusion offers a comprehensive overview of how Latin America has evolved over the past two hundred years.

Interspersed through the book are country fact boxes. Each is placed to coincide with a discussion of the country it describes. The statistics provided in these boxes are from the current *CIA World Factbook*, which you can access on the Internet. Some of the data presented are based on statistics provided by the Latin American governments, each of which determines its own criteria for gathering and presenting data. Other data are based on estimates, and some information is a bit dated. In some cases, aggregate percentages do not come out to exactly 100 percent due to rounding.

These factors make precise comparisons difficult, particularly in the areas of ethnic composition, religious affiliation, and population living in poverty. Keep in mind also that poverty in Argentina is not the same as poverty in Haiti. Despite these limitations, the country fact boxes should help you to assess the current levels of development, ethnic and social composition, and quality of life of the peoples of each Latin American country. A country fact box for the United States is included to allow for comparison.

Finally, a couple of words on terminology. The term “Indian” is used in this book interchangeably with “native” and “indigenous.” But in Latin America, the term “*indio*” is disrespectful, even pejorative; “*indigena*” is the best word to use when referring to native people in Spanish. Latin Americans can be sensitive to the words “America” and “Americans,” which they correctly believe include them along with the United States and Canada. Therefore, the book refers to the United States as “the United States,” or abbreviated as “the U.S.,” not as “America.” When Latin Americans are quoted in the text using the term “America,” they are normally referring to Latin America, not the United States.

I

COLONIAL ROOTS

1

Origins of the Colonial Legacies

The year 1492 was much more than the beginning of Iberian conquest and settlement in the Western Hemisphere: It launched the five-hundred-year period of European transoceanic imperialism. There had been grand and extensive empires before—such as the Han dynasty; the Roman, Mongol, and Ottoman empires; and in the Americas, the Inca and Aztec empires—but none that spanned oceans. In the four centuries following Columbus's landfall, Europeans incrementally extended their grip on the non-European world. Driven by a search for wealth and by a sense of racial, cultural, and often religious superiority, the Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, Dutch, Russians, and others appropriated for themselves the Americas, much of Asia, and eventually almost all of Africa and Oceania.

Latin America not only was the original venue of European transoceanic imperialism, but also experienced one of the longest colonial periods of all the areas that came under European control. Whether we count from Columbus's 1492 landfall, the Portuguese arrival in Brazil in 1500, or the fall of the Aztec empire in 1521, the colonial period, which ended in mainland Iberian America by 1825, lasted three centuries; in Cuba and Puerto Rico, almost four. By comparison, the English colonies that would become the United States extended from the founding of Virginia in 1607 to the British defeat in 1783—well short of two centuries. For perspective, the Portuguese had the greatest staying power of all European imperialists, holding Goa on India's west coast from 1510 to 1961 and Macao in China from 1557 to 1999.

The long colonial period in Latin America produced enduring legacies. Among these are languages, gender and race relations, mentalities, religiosity, diverse folkways, and an amalgamation of cultures from three continents. These are cultural traits that have been modified over time, but that persist today.

Other colonial legacies have been central to the political life of the independent Latin American countries. They have been contested between progressives who see

them as atavistic impediments to modernization, development, and democracy and conservatives who consider them bastions of the colonial order that they have sought to preserve for their own benefit and bulwarks against change that they deem threatening. These politically contested colonial legacies include authoritarian governance, the powerful Roman Catholic Church, a rigid social hierarchy, the large landed estate, and economic dependency. While the first four have divided conservatives and progressives during much of the postcolonial period, the same cannot be said of the economic dependency. Both camps have embraced economic nationalism to fight against dependency at different times, but, generally, progressives have been more critical of economic dependency and more nationalistic in their policies than their conservative counterparts. This chapter offers an overview of Latin America's colonial period with emphasis on the origins of the institutions, values, and practices that became the colonial legacies which have been central to postindependence politics and to the formation of contemporary Latin America.

THE CLASH OF TWO WORLDS

Latin America began with conquest, followed by Iberian occupation of most of Mexico, Central America, South America, and some of the Caribbean islands. Conquest is a staple of world history. From Alexander the Great to Genghis Khan to Hitler, conquest has taken a huge toll in human life and caused immense material destruction, and the conquered populations have normally paid an enormous price for their defeat. But no conquest had a greater impact on the world than the Spanish and Portuguese conquest and occupation of the majority of the Western Hemisphere.

In addition to pioneering five centuries of European imperialism, the Iberian conquest of America joined two worlds separated by a vast ocean and previously isolated from and unknown to each other. It connected different peoples and cultures, different flora and fauna, and different microbes, with profound results—both beneficial and detrimental. The most beneficial was the enrichment of the world's diet through the Columbian Exchange, which sent corn, potatoes, tomatoes, chiles, and dozens of other foods along with tobacco to Europe and eventually throughout the world, while introducing wheat, rice, sugar, coffee, bananas, citrus, cows, pigs, sheep, and horses to the Americas. Undoubtedly, the most dire consequence of the Columbian Exchange was the demographic catastrophe in the Americas, in which virtually the entire native population of the Caribbean islands was wiped out within two generations and as much as 90 percent of the native population in parts of the mainland disappeared within a century. This disaster derived primarily from the diseases that the Europeans brought—smallpox, typhus, measles, influenza, and plague, to which the American natives had no immunity because of the oceans separating the Western Hemisphere from the rest of the world. After hitting bottom in the mid-seventeenth century, the Indian population stabilized and began a gradual recovery, without

coming close to preconquest numbers. It is believed that the Americas contributed syphilis to the Old World.

The exact population of Latin America at the time of European contact is unknown, but a mid-range estimate is approximately fifty million; by contrast, Portugal had roughly a million people and the Spanish kingdoms around seven million. Latin America was very diverse demographically, having some 350 major tribal groups and over 160 distinct language families. These peoples can be distinguished also by their levels of development and sophistication. The least developed were the nomadic or seminomadic hunters and gatherers. More sophisticated were the sedentary and semisedentary practitioners of agriculture. Finally, there were the high civilizations characterized by sedentary agriculture, dense populations, complex societies, urbanization, advanced engineering, elaborate public structures, sophisticated theologies, and powerful ruling classes. Numerous high civilizations had flourished and waned in Mesoamerica and the Andean area by the time of European contact, including the Maya of Mexico and Guatemala. When the Spaniards arrived, they found the latest in this succession of high civilizations: the Aztec and Inca empires.

The conquests of the Aztecs and the Incas were the most dramatic in the entire process of European subjugation of America. Although separated by thousands of miles, and despite having distinctive peoples and cultures, these magnificent empires had important features in common. They were new, less than a century old when the Spaniards arrived, created by conquest of numerous ethnolinguistic groups, or tribes. Both were extensive and heavily populated: the Aztec Empire comprised some 85,000 square miles in central and southern Mexico and up to twenty million people, while the Inca covered around 772,000 square miles along the Andean spine of South America (from the southern boundary of today's Colombia to Chile's Central Valley) and contained between eight million and twelve million people. Both were governed by absolute rulers who were believed to be demigods—particularly the Inca emperor, or *Sapa Inca*. Both Aztecs and Incas appropriated much of their subjects' wealth and concentrated it in their capitals. The recollection of conqueror Bernal Díaz del Castillo upon reaching Tenochtitlán reflects the imperial bounty of the Aztec capital: "Some of our soldiers even asked whether the things that we saw were not a dream."¹ Spaniards likewise marveled at the organization of the Inca Empire and the riches of its capital, Cuzco.

The conquests unfolded in two stages: first, toppling the empires, and then, a longer process of gaining firm control over the former empires' peoples. Hernán Cortés's defeat of the Aztecs came first, in 1521, and it gave Francisco Pizarro and his men important insights into how to defeat the Incas a decade later. Although vastly outnumbered and facing professional imperial armies, the Spanish had advantages that allowed them to prevail in both encounters. Among these were superior weapons and armor, horses (which have been likened to tanks on a modern battlefield), and invaluable assistance from native groups that the Aztecs and Incas had conquered and incorporated into their empires. A smallpox epidemic in the Aztec capital facilitated

**Aztec calendar stone**

Source: Library of Congress, photograph by William Henry Jackson

the final Spanish assault. The Spaniards arrived in the Inca Empire at the conclusion of a civil war for control of the empire between two royal brothers, Atahualpa and Huáscar; Atahualpa prevailed, but the war left deep animosities and weakened armies which the Spaniards exploited.

The ultimate Spanish advantage in both Mexico and Peru was their recognition that the Aztec emperor Moctezuma and the Inca ruler Atahualpa were at once absolute monarchs and demigods, omnipotent and autocratic, to the point that their subjects, including their generals and armies, were paralyzed without their rulers' orders. By capturing and manipulating these imperial lords, the *conquistadores* opened the way to victory. To the Spaniards, these conquests were unheard of: heroic episodes that glorified the soldiers, the king, and the Christian god. The conquests shattered the natives' world as they knew it and set a course of exploitation and degradation that survived the colonial period and continues today.

The Aztec and Inca empires were the greatest prizes in America, as no other area held the vast treasures of precious metals and dense native populations found in these regions. Subjugation of the other areas of the Americas followed different patterns. Areas such as Central America, northern Mexico, Chile, and Argentina initially disappointed the Spaniards who were seeking the valuable fruits of conquest provided by the Aztec and Inca empires. Spaniards who explored and settled in those areas had to make do with little or no gold or silver and sparse Indian populations to exploit. Therefore, while most of Spanish America beyond central Mexico and Peru



Hernán Cortés

Source: Library of Congress

was occupied by the late 1500s, much of it was thinly settled and yielded relatively little in rewards.

Portuguese occupation of Brazil following initial contact in 1500 was similar to that of Spanish America beyond Mexico and Peru. Finding neither precious metals nor centralized empires, and focusing on its new, lucrative trade with Asia, Portugal did not commit military resources capable of bringing large territories and dispersed populations under control. The dominant Tupí peoples found along the coastal strip that the Portuguese occupied were semisedentary, enabling them to relocate their villages to the interior beyond effective European control. Thus, the subjugation of the Brazilian Indians was not a conquest but a gradual process of gaining control

incrementally, and at the end of the colonial period, many natives remained free of Portuguese domination.

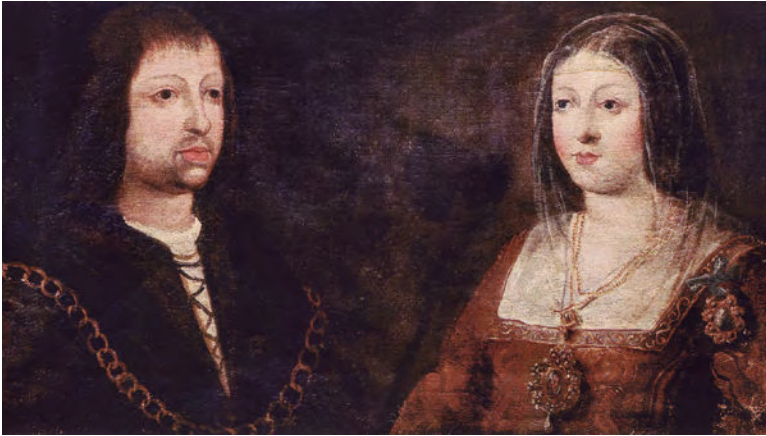
AUTHORITARIAN GOVERNANCE

At the onset of Spanish imperialism, Queen Isabella of Castile and King Ferdinand of Aragon were in the process of imposing far-reaching change on their kingdoms. Monarchs of two realms that shared the Iberian Peninsula with Portugal, Moorish Granada, and smaller entities, Isabella and Ferdinand married in 1469 and assumed their thrones in 1474 and 1479, respectively. They were determined to create a united and powerful monarchy out of a medieval system in which power was dispersed among the nobility, the Catholic Church, powerful orders of knights, and cities possessing charters of rights—whose representatives met periodically in the *cortes*, or parliament, to review the royal agendas and authorize taxes. While Ferdinand left the political institutions of Aragon essentially intact, the royal couple focused their ambitions on Castile, which was four times larger than Aragon in both territory and population.

The measures Isabella and Ferdinand took in Castile were designed to reduce or break the power of these counterweights to royal authority and centralize power in their own hands. They expanded the number of *corregidores* (literally, corulers) sent to strengthen royal authority over the cities and increased their control over the



Iberia c. 1481.



Wedding portrait of Isabella and Ferdinand

Source: Library of Congress, photograph appeared in *GEO Epoche*, Vol. 31, 2008

countryside by reorganizing and augmenting the *Santa Hermandad*, or Holy Brotherhood, a militarized police force. Ferdinand became master of the main orders of knights, thus curbing their independence and gaining access to their considerable wealth. The nobility was weakened by a combination of force, judicious maneuvering, and selective favoritism, and by the couple's development of a professional bureaucracy comprised of university-educated commoners whose first loyalty was to the monarchs. Although the *cortes* continued to meet irregularly, the measures that Isabella and Ferdinand took to augment their power made the parliament less relevant to the governance of Castile.

Isabella and Ferdinand's successor, King Charles I, united the two kingdoms under the Hapsburg royal dynasty in 1516. Although Castile and Aragon remained separate entities, since they were henceforth ruled by a single monarch, we can use the term "Spain" from this point forward. Charles was well positioned and disposed to continue the process of strengthening the monarchy, but the Spanish conquests in America posed new and unprecedented challenges to his authority. Following the defeat of the Aztec and Inca rulers, his primary challenge was to complete the conquests by establishing control over his millions of new subjects on the American mainland. When the smoke cleared over the destroyed Aztec capital, there were around one thousand Spaniards among nearly twenty million natives in the territory that would become New Spain—today's Mexico and Central America. When the Spaniards captured the Inca capital twelve years later, they faced a similar scenario: a few hundred Spaniards in the midst of millions of natives. Establishing control over the masses of Indians, then, was the first imperative for conquerors and king alike.

Spanish control over the former Aztec and Inca subjects was facilitated by the structure of the native empires. As they expanded from the Valley of Mexico, the

Aztecs had left the rulers of the conquered peoples in control of their own regions, so long as they delivered the taxes (in goods) that the Aztecs imposed and paid homage to the Aztecs' special god, Huitzilopochtli. The Incas did the same with the rulers of the peoples they conquered, although they exercised closer control over their territories and tried to integrate the conquered peoples into Inca culture. But both empires were very young: The Incas had begun to conquer beyond their Cuzco homeland in 1438 and the Aztecs beyond the Valley of Mexico only in 1453. Many groups in Mexico still seethed with resentment against the Aztecs and readily accepted Cortés and the king of Spain as their new overlords, perhaps in the misplaced hope that they would be more benevolent rulers than the Aztecs. Conquered groups in the Inca Empire were less receptive to the Spaniards, but some did collaborate, and all eventually were forced to accept Spanish rule.

After decapitating the empires by capturing and killing their rulers, the Spaniards confirmed the tribal chiefs (*caciques* in Mexico and *kurakas* in Peru) in their positions of authority over their own people. These chiefs in turn were overseen by Spanish officials, the *corregidores* (territorial administrators based on the Spanish office), who by the early seventeenth century numbered two hundred in New Spain and eighty-eight in Peru. Accustomed to authoritarian rule under both their tribal chiefs and their Inca or Aztec overlords, the natives acquiesced in rule from afar by the Spanish king through his officials on the ground, although not without some resistance and numerous rebellions, especially in the former Inca Empire.

In the other areas they occupied—those lacking dense populations and centralized authority—the Europeans were forced to impose their authority piecemeal. Some native groups successfully resisted the Spanish: The Yaqui, Apache, and others in northern Mexico; the Indians of the Argentine plains; and the Araucanians of southern Chile threatened the security or very survival of Spanish settlements in or near their territories. The Araucanians posed such a danger in southern Chile that the Spanish built a string of forts along the Bío-Bío River frontier and stationed there the largest Spanish military contingent in America. None of the above-mentioned groups was subdued until the late nineteenth century—decades after the colonial period had ended.

Heir to an emerging absolute monarchy at home, King Charles saw the opportunity to construct a system of governance in the New World that would not only control the natives but also severely limit the power and authority of Spanish colonists. He first had to deal with Cortés, whose astounding feats of conquest in Mexico had earned him the steadfast loyalty of his men and the awe of the native masses, and with the Pizarro brothers in the former Inca Empire. While Cortés threatened no disobedience to the crown, the king recognized that the conqueror had the power to challenge royal authority in Mexico should he choose to do so. In Peru, the conquering Spaniards did challenge the king directly, killing the first viceroy he sent there in 1546.

To bring Mexico and Peru under effective control, King Charles gradually whittled away the conquerors' powers and perquisites and replaced their initial authority

with a formal administrative structure based on institutions transferred from Spain and its European possessions, and staffed at its upper levels by Spaniards dispatched to the colonies. Above the *corregidores*, the royal administration included *audiencias*, or royal high courts, of which there were thirteen in Spain's American territories by the end of the colonial period. The highest authority was the viceroy, or vice-king, always chosen from the noblest of Spanish families. Until late in the colonial period, there were only two viceroalties in all of Spanish America: located in Mexico City (from 1535) with jurisdiction over Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean; and in Lima (from 1543) with control over all of Spanish South America and Panama. In the eighteenth century, the crown sought to strengthen its authority in South America by carving two new viceroalties out of the sprawling jurisdiction of Lima: the viceroalty of New Granada created in 1739 with its capital in Bogotá, and that of the Río de la Plata in 1776, whose capital was Buenos Aires. Overseeing all royal administration in the Americas was the Council of the Indies in Spain, which dealt with policy and administrative matters and advised the king. A parallel structure of royal treasury officials was also established.

The institutions that were prohibited in the king's new domains were as important to the construction of royal authority as the administrative structure transferred from Spain. No *cortes* or parliament was allowed to develop; of the titles of nobility awarded to worthy colonials, none carried the prerogatives that such titles entailed in Spain; and city charters conferred no special powers. The only representative institutions, the city councils, were very limited in their purview and by the 1560s, in the more important cities, many of their seats were acquired by purchase rather than by election.

The king designed the colonial administration to extend his highly centralized power across the Atlantic. However, given the distance and travel time between Spain and the colonies—for example, 75 days on average westbound to the Mexican port of Veracruz and 128 days eastbound, and much longer to and from Lima—a good deal of flexibility was necessarily built into the system. The sale of offices in the Americas also weakened royal control. As silver began to flow into Spain from Mexico and Peru in the 1550s, the Spanish monarchy overextended itself in the long European wars of religion fought between Protestant and Catholic forces and went bankrupt several times beginning in 1557. To raise revenue, the crown began selling offices—initially city council seats; then treasury, *corregidor*, and *audiencia* positions in the 1600s; and eventually a few viceroys took office through purchase.

Men bought these offices for both prestige and profit. *Corregidores*, for example, normally purchased their offices for fixed terms of three or five years and made money by abusing their Indian subjects in various ways, including forcing them to purchase goods they neither wanted nor needed at inflated prices. This practice of buying offices engrained corruption into the administrative system which, in many Latin American countries, persists today. While distance, corruption, and a series of weak kings in Spain diluted royal authority in the late sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, the authoritarian, top-down model of colonial governance remained

constant. After the French Bourbon line replaced the Hapsburg dynasty as rulers of Spain in 1713, a series of administrative changes, known as the Bourbon Reforms, reversed the long-term weakening of royal authority over the kings' American domains.

Portuguese governance in Brazil was initially much less centralized than its Spanish counterpart. The crown paid little attention to Brazil for some thirty years after Portuguese sailors landed and claimed the territory in 1500, as there was neither the treasure nor the dense population that the Spaniards found in Mexico and Peru. Moreover, the great wealth in spices and silk brought by Portuguese traders from Asia focused royal attention on the other side of the world. Rather than promote the colonization of Brazil directly, the king granted huge tracts of land stretching inland from the coast, along with extensive powers, to twelve influential Portuguese in exchange for the obligation to settle and develop their domains; only two succeeded in the long run. The king sent a governor general to represent him in 1549. Other administrative institutions were extended gradually to Brazil in response to foreign threats against the colony and to Portugal's loss of most of its Asian holdings to the Dutch in the seventeenth century, which elevated Brazil's importance to the mother country. The two royal courts were established in 1609 and 1752, Brazil's first viceroy was appointed in 1720, while city councils carried out most local administration. Under the direction of the powerful Marquis of Pombal, prime minister from 1750 to 1777, the Portuguese crown strengthened its control over the colony in a number of ways. Though less rigid and controlling than Spain's colonial administration, by the end of the colonial period the Portuguese had adopted a top-down, authoritarian approach to the administration of Brazil.

THE POWERFUL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church was present in the Americas from the earliest years of the Iberian colonial enterprise. Spanish sea and land expeditions of exploration and conquest were required to include priests, and men of the cloth played important roles in the Portuguese settlement of Brazil. By the end of the colonial period, the Roman Catholic Church was a powerful, wealthy, and ubiquitous institution that anchored the Iberians' colonial systems and exercised a monopoly over formal religion.

Just as they molded the state to their designs, Isabella and Ferdinand fundamentally altered religion in their realms. When they ascended their thrones, Castile and Aragon were home to Roman Catholics, Muslims, and Jews. Christianity took root in the fourth century CE, while Iberia was part of the Roman Empire. Jews had been present since at least the third century. Islam arrived from across the straits of Gibraltar in 711 when Moorish armies, comprised of North African Arabs and Berbers, invaded and overran Iberia in their quest to acquire land and vassals and to spread their new religion, then less than a century old. Within

decades of the Muslims' triumph, small armies of Christians in the northern mountains began to slowly drive them back southward in the multi-century *reconquista*, or reconquest. By 1248, only the southern kingdom of Granada remained in Moorish hands.

The final stage of the *reconquista* began in 1482 and ended in January 1492 with Ferdinand and Isabella's triumphal entry into the city of Granada. The monarchs then began to implement measures designed to create religious uniformity across their lands. Driven by the ambition to impose a unifying institution on their subjects as well as by religious zeal, they decreed in 1492 that all Jews convert to Catholicism or leave their domains within four months. Estimates of the Jewish population of Castile and Aragon range between one hundred thousand and three hundred thousand, of whom roughly half are believed to have converted. The remainder departed to settle in North Africa, the Middle East, and beyond as the Sephardic Jews. Ten years later, the monarchs extended the same order to the Muslims who remained behind after their rulers had been driven out of Granada. By 1502, Roman Catholicism had become the sole religion allowed in Castile and Aragon. The imposition of religious uniformity provided a unifying institution for the monarchs' subjects who were divided by regionalism, culture, and several different languages. The church would jealously guard its monopoly of religion in both the homeland and the American colonies, relying in this endeavor on the Inquisition which had been established in Castille in 1480 and would be exported to the New World.

Following Columbus's return from his first voyage in 1493, Isabella and Ferdinand asked Pope Alexander VI, a native of Ferdinand's Kingdom of Aragon, to grant them title to the islands that Columbus had found and the unknown lands that might be discovered through further exploration. Invoking the temporal authority that popes were accustomed to wielding at that time, Alexander acceded, but reserved lands closer to Europe for the Portuguese, who were already exploring and slaving along the African coast. The line of demarcation between the Portuguese and Spanish domains was moved westward the following year by the Treaty of Tordesillas, giving Portugal a claim to a small portion of today's Brazil. In exchange for the pope's generosity, the monarchs accepted the obligation of converting every last person in those uncharted lands to the Roman Catholic faith. As a result of this so-called Papal Donation, which was never accepted as legitimate by the other European monarchs, conversion of each successive group of Indians they encountered was of paramount importance to the Iberians, especially the Spaniards.

To facilitate the task of conversion on what would be a massive scale, Alexander granted the Spanish crowns extensive control, known as the royal patronage or *patronato real*, over the church on the islands and any other future domains they might conquer. Spanish monarchs were empowered to appoint all clergy, up to the level of archbishop; regulate the establishment of churches, monasteries, and convents; and collect the tithe, a tax on agricultural production that sustained the church's coffers. The Portuguese crown received similar powers, known as the *padroado real*. Royal control over the church did not extend to church doctrine, the exclusive domain of the popes.

The conquests of the Aztec and Inca empires, and indeed the engagements with natives throughout the Americas, were religious as well as military wars—battles of gods as well as armies. The encounters occurred in the prescientific age, when most matters had explanations based on religion. It was the will of the Christian god and the aid of their patron saint, Santiago Matamoros (St. James the Moor slayer), that provided inspiration for the Spaniards and, they believed, fueled their victories. The Aztecs and Incas relied on their pantheons of gods for stability, prosperity, and protection. As they advanced toward the empires' capitals, the Spaniards wrecked native temples whenever possible and placed a cross atop the ruins to symbolize the superiority of their god over the natives' gods. Defeats made the natives begin to doubt their gods' ability to protect them, and the Spanish god rose in their esteem. This sapped their will to resist and conditioned them to accept the Spaniards' god, if initially only as an addition to their native gods. As recounted by a native chronicler, prior to battle the people of Cholula, a province of the Aztec Empire, shouted: "Let the strangers come! We will see if they are so powerful! Our god Quetzalcoatl is here with us, and they can never defeat him." The tone changed dramatically after the battle: "The *Cholutecas* understood and believed that the God of the white men . . . was more potent than their own."²

Following the natives' defeat or surrender, the church's initial activity in the New World was a massive missionary effort to convert them—all millions of them. The crown entrusted the "religious conquest" to the main religious orders found in Spain: the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, and after the order's founding in 1540, the Jesuits. They faced the enormous challenge of converting polytheistic peoples who worshipped multiple gods, each with its own function or functions, to belief in a monotheistic religion with a single god. But the missionaries' zeal was extraordinary: a Franciscan in Mexico City reported baptizing fourteen thousand Indians daily, while another used his saliva after running out of holy water. Natives of the former Inca Empire proved particularly adept at blending elements of their old religions with the new Christian doctrine, producing interesting patterns of religious comingling, or syncretism. Thus, church authorities organized campaigns of "extirpation of idolatry" in the seventeenth century to attempt to rid the Andean natives of their heterodox beliefs. In Mexico, the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe grew stronger over the centuries and helped keep the natives faithful to their new religion. Whatever the degree of syncretism, the natives in Mexico, the Andes, and everywhere the missionaries reached became at least nominally Christian.

Spaniards recognized that converting the king's new subjects involved more than fulfilling their obligations under the Papal Donation and saving souls; conversion was also an important instrument of control. The Indians were taught that the missionaries were the essential intermediaries between themselves and their omnipotent new god, and the neophytes were required to attend mass and catechism and partake in the sacraments. In the Indian parishes, the missionaries' word was law; Indians were taught to be submissive, to work for and obey the Spaniards during life on earth, and to expect their reward in the afterlife. In the elaborate Jesuit missions in

Paraguay, control was so complete that the missionaries rang bells throughout the day to signal the activities their charges were commanded to carry out, including sexual relations. By the late 1500s, the conversion was essentially complete except in the more remote parts of the Spanish domains. Reflecting their success, the missionary orders eventually surrendered their duties to parish priests and returned to their customary pursuits of charity and education.

Following the great missionary effort, the clergy gradually settled into a more routine life, either offering mass and the sacraments to their parishioners or living by the vows of religious orders in monasteries. Since individuals' fortunes or misfortunes and natural events such as earthquakes and droughts were thought to be God's work, the church and its personnel enjoyed great power and prestige. Thus, many were attracted to the church as a career, for life as a priest or member of a male or a female religious order was prestigious and often financially rewarding, and until late in the colonial period was reserved primarily for Spaniards and their descendants. While some possessed a genuine religious calling, others did not. Priests could live comfortably or even become wealthy from the fees they charged their parishioners for administering the sacraments and sometimes from running businesses on the side.

The church as an institution accumulated wealth from bequests by the faithful, dividends on diverse investments, and by serving as banker to the colonials. The



Cathedral of Lima

Source: Library of Congress

church was a major owner of the large landed estates that dominated the countryside in much of Spanish America. The Jesuit order was known for the efficient management of its numerous estates. More wealth was accumulated from the dowries required of women entering prestigious convents such as Santa Catalina in Arequipa, Peru, where each nun's elaborate dwelling had adjoining slave quarters. While performing essential services such as running alms houses and hospitals, providing education to sons of the elites, and keeping birth and death records, the church by the late colonial period had become a huge bureaucracy paralleling the civil bureaucracy that sustained the crown's authoritarian rule.

The Catholic Church's monopoly of religion in Spain was extended to the Americas, and the Inquisition was charged with enforcing the monopoly and guarding against any kind of heresy among professing Catholics. The Inquisition kept subversive information from the faithful through its *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (List of Prohibited Books). *Conversos*, or former Jews who had converted to Christianity in 1492, were often suspected of secretly continuing to practice Judaism in the New World and frequently hauled before the Inquisition, which meted out penalties ranging from public humiliation to, in rare cases, burning at the stake. A few years after the major conquests, Indians were exempted from the Inquisition's oversight because the Spanish considered them intellectually immature and thus incapable of mastering the nuances of Catholic theology.

As the Portuguese did not encounter large, highly organized native populations such as those in the Aztec and Inca empires, they did not face the challenge of rapid, mass baptisms and conversions to Christianity as required by the Papal Donation. Instead, they relied primarily on the new Jesuit order to convert the dispersed natives living along the coastal strip where the Portuguese settled. The Jesuits gathered the Indians into new villages, the *aldeias*, in order to convert and tutor them while attempting to protect them from colonists who sought to enslave them. Paralleling the construction of the colonial administration, religious institutions were slow to develop. The first bishop was assigned to Brazil in 1552, and at the end of the colonial period, six bishops and one archbishop comprised the entire church hierarchy—a contrast to the thirty-one bishops and six archbishops who served the much more extensive Spanish Empire in America.

A RIGID SOCIAL HIERARCHY

By the end of the colonial period, Latin American society was a mosaic of races, colors, cultures, and languages from three continents. This outcome was not what the Iberians, and particularly the Spanish, had envisioned for their American empires. The Spanish foresaw an empire constructed on a caste system that still existed in their homeland, based on the medieval notion of two distinct estates—the noble and the common—with the clergy constituting a third estate. In America, the two estates would be the Europeans and the Indians, coexisting but rigidly separated except for

certain regulated points of intersection. The Iberians would administer and exploit primarily from urban enclaves, while the natives would continue to occupy their ancestral lands. The lower estate, or (following Aristotle) the *república de indios*, would support the upper, or the *república de españoles*, by providing labor and taxes. As Christians and subjects of the crown, the natives would be protected from avaricious Spaniards who might seek to enslave them and take their lands.

But things did not turn out that way. The two-republics model began to unravel with the arrival of lusty conquerors who appropriated native women for sex and occasionally marriage, yielding the first mestizos, and the scarcity of European women among the early settlers contributed to the proliferation of these biracial offspring. But the cause of the demise of the two-republics principle was, primarily, the decimation of the native population owing to European diseases and, secondarily, mistreatment at the hands of the Iberians.

We can only imagine the impact on survivors as they experienced a force that they could not understand kill their families and neighbors and demolish their world. The impact on the Iberians, especially the Spanish, is more easily understood. For Spaniards who settled in Mexico and Guatemala and in the central Andes, where the native population was most dense, the millions of Indians who surrounded them constituted an unimaginably abundant source of labor. Native labor was originally allocated under the *encomienda*, a grant of Indians obligated to provide labor as well as goods to the conquerors and well-connected Spaniards who received the grants. As the natives' numbers dropped, the Spaniards were forced to develop new approaches to organizing and rationing the labor that remained available.

Forced labor was called the *repartimiento* in Mexico and *mita* in the Andes. Royal officials decided how to assign the labor, usually to agriculture and mining. Every able-bodied male Indian was obligated to participate in the labor drafts, and as the native population continued to fall, the burden on survivors became heavier. Beyond these areas of dense population, Spanish colonists still demanded Indian labor for agriculture, mining, and other economic activities; as the population declined, so did the possibilities of profitable enterprises. The demand for labor on the Brazilian sugar plantations was extremely high and the native population relatively sparse.

The long-term solution to the shortage of native labor, in areas where economic activity could sustain the cost, was African slavery. Slavery was not new to many African peoples as tribal warfare routinely yielded captives who served the victors in that capacity. In most cases, slavery was not hereditary or even permanent for the captive; it was commonly a temporary condition of servitude and lack of freedom. When Europeans began using Africans as slaves in the early 1400s, the nature of the institution changed. Europeans considered slaves property, or chattel. Slaves were bought and sold like any other commodity, their condition as slaves became permanent, and children of slave mothers became slaves for life.

To supply slaves to the Iberian and other European colonies in the Americas, Africans began delivering captives to outposts established initially by the Portuguese, where they exchanged them for European goods. Originally limited to coastal areas

of western Africa, slaving reached well into the interior in response to rising demand. Europeans, particularly Portuguese, supplemented Africans in slaving expeditions, ensnaring people of varied ethnicities and cultures. Massive demand for slaves in the Americas institutionalized the slave trade and led to the deportation of some 12.5 million Africans to North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean over a period of more than three hundred years.

Slaves bound for the Iberian colonies were perfunctorily baptized into Christianity before embarking on their forced journey. On average, some 20 percent of the women, men, and children perished on the overcrowded, unsanitary ships known in Portuguese as *tumbeiros* (floating tombs). Upon arrival in Salvador de Bahia, Vera Cruz, or Havana, Africans were displayed in slave markets and sold, not as individual humans but as *peças de Indias* (pieces of the Indies)—a category determined by their expected productivity and life span; an older woman or a child might be half a piece of the Indies, while a robust young male might be a full piece. Africans were deployed above all in agriculture; the highest concentration initially was in the Brazilian sugar industry, a highly profitable enterprise. But slaves were used throughout the colonial economy, in a wide variety of economic enterprises, wherever profits justified the purchase and maintenance costs. Wealthy elites indulged in household slaves not only to perform work, but also to enhance their social status. Later in the colonial period, African slaves provided virtually all the labor in Cuba's sugar production as well as in the Caribbean islands that were taken over by Spain's European rivals.

With the racial mixing between Spanish and Portuguese men and native women that commenced upon contact, compounded by the introduction of African slaves, the simplistic model of the “two republics” envisioned by the Iberians broke down, destroyed by miscegenation. With the passage of time, a social hierarchy developed whose complexity was reflected in the dozens of racial categories recognized by the colonials. These multiple racial–social groupings can be reduced to four broadly defined categories of people found in Spanish America.

At the top of the social hierarchy were the Spaniards and their descendants, the creoles. In addition to their high status, males of “pure blood” enjoyed access to formal education offered by religious orders and to the twenty-plus universities founded during the colonial period—ten of them doctorate-granting “major” universities. They alone qualified for the profession of law and for membership in the merchant guilds, posts in the colonial administration, and until late in the colonial period, the priesthood. While these elite males shared important privileges, Spaniards and creoles were not equals. Spaniards by birth commanded the bulk of the most prestigious positions in both the civil administration and the church; they virtually monopolized the positions of viceroy and predominated among the bishops and archbishops and, for most of the colonial years, among *audiencia* judges and prosecutors. Spaniards also tended to look down on creoles as somewhat degenerate, owing to the supposedly enervating tropical climate of much of the empire. As the colonial period advanced, distance and tensions between creoles and Spaniards increased.

In the middle of the social hierarchy were the *castas*, or persons of mixed race, who could be combinations of two or all three races found in colonial Latin America. Generally speaking, they had neither rights nor obligations. They could not obtain a formal education nor enter a profession, but they were not subject to the labor draft as Indians were. They were normally exempt from the tribute that Indians paid, although from time to time colonial authorities sought to apply the head tax to *castas*. The *castas* had a reputation as disorderly and untrustworthy, as revealed in a Spaniard's characterization of them in seventeenth-century Peru: "Because they are most often born out of adultery or other illicit unions . . . , they bear the taint of illegitimacy and other vices which they take in, as it were, with their milk. The majority of them come from a vicious and depraved environment."³ With the passage of time, restrictions on the *castas*, such as entering the priesthood, were partially relaxed. The *castas* became the largest social grouping in many parts of Latin America before the colonial period ended.

Indians and Africans shared the bottom rung of the social ladder. Spaniards tended to view the Indians as inferior—as perpetual minors lacking the ability to adapt to Spanish standards and customs. The priests saw Indians as souls to save; the conquerors and subsequent settlers saw them as sources of labor; and the crown saw them as subjects and sources of tax revenue. Thus, Indians were converted and ministered to by the priests, forced to labor by the colonists, and ruled over and charged a tribute, or head tax, by the crown. In all cases, the Indians were expected to be subservient and obedient. In short, the Indians had many obligations and few rights.

Common Indians were initially prohibited from wearing Spanish-style clothing, owning horses, and selling goods of substantial value. They had no access to education and no entry to the professions. They had "protectors" (Spaniards assigned to watch after their interests), but in practice, the protection was minimal. *Caciques* and *kurakas*, however, had some privileges. They were normally exempt from the tribute and in a few locations had access to formal education provided by religious orders, but they could not practice the professions. Descendants of the Inca royalty and nobility living in and around the former Inca capital of Cuzco were a group apart who received special recognition of their status from the Spanish monarchy.

The common Indians' obligations to pay tribute and provide labor were exacerbated by the drastic decline in their population. While the Indians' numbers fell, Spanish treasury officials were reluctant to accept less in tribute and colonists still expected the amount of labor yielded by a much larger population in the early post-conquest years. Although royal officials tried to limit the burdens, creoles resisted and squeezed all they could out of the natives. One result was rebellions, almost all of which were localized and posed little real threat to Spanish control. A major exception was a series of eighteenth-century rebellions in the former Inca Empire that culminated in the Tupac Amaru rebellion of 1780–1782, which spread through the Andes and threatened Spanish control of Cuzco and several other cities.

African slaves, of course, had the obligation to serve their master's will. Their quality of life was determined sometimes by fate: Was their master considerate or abusive,

permissive or closely controlling? Beyond fate, the primary determinant of quality of life was whether slaves were field hands or domestic workers. Field slaves normally led short, miserable lives and had little hope for a meaningful existence, while domestic slaves sometimes could carve out a niche that allowed a degree of freedom and a few perquisites such as decent food and living quarters. In urban areas, slaves often had the opportunity to circulate through the city. Owners rented slaves to perform work for others, and some slave women sold goods in the markets for their masters. Social contacts and a small degree of self-determination probably made these slaves' lives less onerous than those of field slaves. Yet, the frequency of slave runaways and rebellions tells us that slaves longed for freedom. The runaway slave settlement of Palmares in Brazil, which contained some twenty thousand inhabitants at its peak and repelled Portuguese attacks for nearly a century until its destruction in the 1690s, was testament to slaves' resistance to their condition.

The status of slaves in Latin America was somewhat more flexible than it was in the English colonies. Slaves could turn to the church or the courts to plead a case against an unusually abusive master or to ask for manumission. Slaves, especially domestic ones, were occasionally freed, most commonly through a deceased owner's will. In the cases in which they were able to accumulate enough money, slaves could purchase their freedom under Iberian law.

Colonial Latin American society was highly stratified but was not strictly a caste society. In the latter, of which India until recently was the paradigm, one is born into a stratum, or caste, and regardless of circumstances cannot move out of it; there is no mobility from one caste to another. In colonial Latin America, despite many obstacles to mobility, people could occasionally move upward in the hierarchy, and downward mobility was not uncommon. Indians who abandoned their communal villages, cast off their native clothing, and learned Spanish could sometimes pass as *castas*, while individuals of Spanish background who became impoverished might sink into the same broad grouping. Racial categories were as much socially as genetically determined.

There was another method available to select *castas*, normally illegitimate sons of Spaniards or creoles, to advance up the social hierarchy. If the father was caring and had money, the son could ask for a formal change in status. This involved filing a formal petition to the king and accompanying it with a sum of money. The petition asked for rectification of the petitioner's "birth defect," or condition as a *casta*. If approved, the petition would result in a decree known as *gracias al sacar* that certified the individual's "purity of blood," meaning that the mixed-race person had been declared a creole and could enjoy the opportunities open to others of his new social class. This illustrates not only the limited flexibility of the social structure, but also the Spanish crown's perpetual need of money.

In addition to the hierarchy of race and color, another fault line divided and defined colonial Latin American society. Gender determined rights and obligations throughout society, most strictly among Spanish and creole women. Public life was closed to women, as it was throughout the Western world: women were

denied offices in the civil bureaucracy and were not (and still are not) ordained as priests. Their participation in the church was limited to membership in *cofradías*, or sisterhoods dedicated to a particular saint, or in female orders such as the Barefoot Carmelites or the Order of Saint Clare. The choice of becoming a “bride of Christ” appealed to many as an alternative to marriage, as it could offer more outlets for creativity and allow women to escape a husband’s domination. Among other activities, nuns could educate themselves and live intellectual lives, as did the famous Mexican Sor Juana de la Cruz, and sometimes could conduct business from within their cloisters, as did Catarina de Monte Sinay, a Brazilian nun known for her business acumen and the fortune she made.

Though excluded from formal institutions of learning, upper-class girls could obtain rudimentary schooling in convents or from tutors. Women of that station were expected to remain in and run the home, oversee the servant staff, and raise the children. Gendered codes of behavior allowed males to take mistresses and engage in casual sex, while extramarital relations were strictly taboo for women. There were exceptions, of course, like the famous eighteenth-century Limeña actress known as La Perricholi, who appeared to thrive on scandal. Women exercised more power as widows than they did as wives: They inherited a fixed part of their husbands’ estates and might become successful businesswomen.

Behavioral codes were less strict and opportunities for achieving autonomy were greater for mixed-race women. Just as *castas*, in general, were not subject to many rules, so women of that social grouping had more room for maneuver than their upper class counterparts. While individual husbands may have controlled their wives’ activities, in many cases, *casta* women became small-scale entrepreneurs as owners of stores and bars and as market sellers; others worked as domestics and in textile production.

At the bottom of the social hierarchy, Indian and African women faced serious obstacles to self-realization. As customs among the myriad Latin American native ethnicities varied, it is impossible to generalize about the roles, restrictions, and opportunities open to Indian women. With the passage of time, imposition of the Iberian patrimonial ideal may have restricted native women’s roles. Most Indian women shared with native men the general exploitation that European elites imposed on them. Among slaves, women were less likely to be assigned field labor than were males; working in homes or selling in urban markets gave them a chance for better social contacts and material conditions. Yet, being a piece of property, regardless of the latitude allowed by owners, was degrading and dehumanizing. And the emotional and psychological toll of having one’s child sold to another master, beginning what was likely a permanent and painful separation, was traumatic.

The social hierarchy in colonial Brazil mirrored that of Spanish America, with Portuguese and Brazilian-born whites, or *mazombos*, at the top, people of mixed race in the middle, and African slaves and Indians on the bottom. As in the Spanish colonies, regional differences in race and class developed in Brazil. Portuguese settlement began in the near-coastal northeast region that offered ideal soil and climate

for sugarcane cultivation. Planters relied initially on Indian slave labor, but the relatively sparse native population and the Indians' ability to uproot and move beyond Portuguese control made that arrangement untenable. Growing demand for labor on the sugar plantations gave rise to the large-scale importation of Africans from the 1550s on. Thus, the population of that region was primarily black, white, and mulatto. Large cattle ranches developed in the interior of the northeast, the *sertão*, where people of mixed race predominated.

Another area of early Portuguese settlement was São Paulo, where a distinct society developed in relative isolation. Whites and mixed-race *mamelucos* (Indian and white) presided over a lower stratum of Indians, many of them captured in slaving raids by mobile groups known as *bandeirantes* (carriers of banners or flags). These groups of a few dozen to several hundred men, accompanied by Indian auxiliaries, set off for months or years on slaving raids aimed often at Jesuit missions in Paraguay. The *bandeirantes* also explored the interior in search of gold and precious stones, coincidentally pushing Portuguese-claimed territory well beyond the line of demarcation that theoretically defined Brazil's western border with Spanish America. Antônio Raposo Tavares led a legendary expedition between 1648 and 1652 that reached the Andean foothills and then sailed down the Amazon to its mouth, covering some six thousand miles. *Bandeirantes'* discovery of extensive gold deposits in the 1690s attracted hundreds of thousands of Portuguese to Brazil over the following years and caused a substantial migration from the coast to the interior province of Minas Gerais.

ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY

While saving the souls of millions of natives provided the justification for Iberian imperialism in the Americas, Spain and Portugal also colonized for economic advantage. The colonial economic arrangement was based on the theory of mercantilism, which was standard economics at the time. The accumulation of bullion was a major objective of mercantilism, and the economic system devised by the colonizing countries was intended to accomplish that through the development of commercially valuable colonial resources, the creation of preferences for goods from the metropole, the monopolization of trade, and the maintenance of a trade balance favorable to the home countries. Spain and Portugal imported raw materials from the colonies and sold the colonials processed or manufactured goods. In the case of Spanish America, the crown tried to prohibit the cultivation and production of certain commodities, such as vineyards and wine, and olive trees and olive oil, in order to benefit Spanish producers and merchants. This mercantilistic arrangement created colonies that were subject to economic policies and decisions made in Europe, not in America—in other words, economic dependency.

Many parts of Spanish America and Brazil developed little more than subsistence economies, producing almost nothing to export or trade with other regions. Some

produced foodstuffs for consumption in cities and towns and in nearby mining regions. Other areas developed exportable products such as the natural dyes indigo and cochineal, gold, emeralds, pearls, cattle hides, dried meat, cacao, and tobacco. The most lucrative export from Spanish America was silver, found in great abundance in Mexico and Upper Peru (today's Bolivia).

Discovered in the 1540s, the deposits at Potosí in Upper Peru and several sites in Mexico were soon producing prodigiously, creating wealth for the mine operators and the merchants who supplied them. The crown benefited from the "royal fifth," a 20-percent tax on refined ore that was reduced to 10 percent in Mexico owing to the cost of importing the mercury essential to refining. Labor at Potosí was acquired through a wide net of coercion, the *mita*, which yielded thousands of forced Indian laborers from hundreds of miles around the mines who suffered high mortality rates in the dangerous working conditions. Some stayed behind after their draft labor assignments ended, becoming wage laborers who did much of the skilled labor. In Mexico, labor initially was a mixture of forced Indian levies and wage labor, although by the late sixteenth century wage labor predominated. These mining centers provided markets for far-flung enterprises producing foodstuffs, alcohol, textiles, mules, and tallow for the candles that illuminated the dark shafts; in the case of Potosí, which at over thirteen thousand feet of elevation was too high to produce its necessities, goods to sustain the mines and miners came from as far away as the Río de la Plata (today's Argentina), Chile, the Peruvian coast, and Quito. Silver was so valuable and essential to Spain that a special system of armed convoys was designed to protect the precious metal from pirates and privateers; it worked remarkably well until its abolition in the late colonial period.

Sugar, a highly valued commodity in Europe as an alternative to honey for sweetening, was Brazil's primary export. Concentrated in the northeastern regions of Salvador de Bahia and Pernambuco, it was produced on plantations worked by African slaves after the supply of Indian slaves dwindled. Sugar made fortunes for planters and merchants until the second half of the seventeenth century, when England captured Jamaica, the French wrested Haiti from Spain, and the Dutch occupied several smaller islands. With their greater financial resources, more advanced technology, and closer proximity to markets, these rival powers established flourishing sugar plantations and eventually eclipsed Brazil as the main supplier to Europe. The Brazilian economy thereafter entered a long period of decline until the discovery of gold in the 1690s revived the colony's fortunes.

The Iberian design for mercantilistic control of the colonial economies did not work perfectly, as neither Spain nor Portugal was capable of supplying its overseas consumers with all they demanded or enforcing their theoretical monopolies of trade. Thus, rather than enriching the country, much of the silver reaching Spain passed through to northern European countries whose productive capacities were greater, and which made up the deficit of Spanish trade goods for the colonies; some of the profits from the sugar trade went to the same places rather than remaining in Portugal. Eluding efforts to enforce the monopolies, merchants from rival European

countries delivered contraband goods without paying the fees required of legal traders, further eroding the mercantile arrangement. In the late eighteenth century, both countries liberalized their trade policies but continued in vain to try to enforce their monopolies. Economic dependency thus lessened, but persisted.

THE LARGE LANDED ESTATE

Large landed estates dominated many parts of rural Latin America within a century and a half of the Iberians' arrival. Two distinct types of these holdings developed: the plantation and the hacienda (in Brazil, the *sesmaria*). The plantation appeared initially in northeastern Brazilian to produce sugar for export. Plantations were characterized by large size, substantial investment in equipment, a slave labor force, specialization in a single product—normally for export—and dependence on outside sources of foodstuffs. Plantations were fully capitalist enterprises; owners were intimately connected to creditors, export merchants, and shippers. Brazilian plantations were known as *engenhos*, or mills, so named for the facilities that each had for grinding cane and finishing the product for shipment. Plantations appeared in Spanish America, most notably in Cuba from the eighteenth century onward; others developed to produce sugar and other products for growing urban markets.

Most agricultural production for domestic consumption occurred on haciendas (or *sesmarias*), while smaller holdings also contributed to the food supply. In Mexico, parts of Central America, and the Andean region, haciendas coexisted with traditional communal Indian landowning villages, which produced for their own subsistence, while haciendas produced for the markets provided by cities and mines. The crown initially sought to protect Indian land from the ambitions of Spaniards, who during the *reconquista* had become accustomed to receiving large tracts of land and vassals as rewards for military success against the Moors. But as the native population dropped precipitously, Indians were forced to abandon land they could no longer work and were resettled in new towns—a process that freed up more of their land for Spanish occupation. Spaniards and creoles moved in and built houses for themselves, huts for their Indian workers, and facilities for ranching and farming. These holdings were initially illegal, as they contravened the crown's laws designed to uphold the “two republics” principle by keeping natives on their lands and Spaniards primarily in cities and towns. But sacrificing principle to expediency, in one of its repeated approaches to raising funds to offset bankruptcy, the Spanish crown in the 1590s began selling deeds to Spaniards illegally occupying Indian lands—and the de facto hacienda became de jure.

Haciendas varied in size from a few hundred to tens of thousands of acres, depending on location, soil, and climate. Regardless of size, they had in common a resident labor force of Indians or *castas*, or both, low levels of technology and investment, a combination of crop cultivation and cattle or sheep raising, and orientation toward local or regional markets. In contrast to the market- and credit-dependent

plantations, haciendas could more easily survive periods of economic downturn that reduced demand. With diversified production and less reliance on creditors, they could revert to self-sufficiency until market conditions improved. This made the hacienda a durable feature of rural life through the colonial period and beyond.

Haciendas were a major point of contact and acculturation between European and Indian, and were the breeding ground, sometimes literally, of the mixed race population of mestizos. In exchange for their labor and that of their families, resident hacienda workers typically received a hut, a small plot of land on which to grow food, often a ration of comestibles, and sometimes a small wage. Hacendados often offered advances on wages and kept workers permanently indebted, thus tying them to the estate, in an arrangement known as debt peonage. When haciendas were sold, it was common for the indebted resident workers to be listed as property, along with land, structures, and equipment. Hacendados were absolute rulers on their properties, and their power often reached beyond their land's borders to neighboring villages where they hired seasonal hands for planting, harvest, and cattle roundups. Some also encroached on communal village land, which the Indians vigorously resisted. Haciendas dominated the best lands in much of Spanish America and brought their owners income, power, status, and occasionally a title of nobility.

In Brazil, the *sesmarias* coexisted with plantations and smaller agricultural properties. Plantations flourished near the Atlantic coast where conditions were propitious for sugar production, while the *sesmarias* developed further inland. Many of the latter originated with the generous land grants made in the 1530s to induce the settlement of Brazil. Like their Spanish American counterparts, the *sesmarias* were large, worked mostly by non-slave but servile labor, and produced for towns and the slaves working on sugar plantations.

COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA IN CONTEXT

Within the global context of European imperialism, the experience of Latin America was unique. Engaging in broad generalizations, we can suggest that most European colonization yielded two distinct outcomes. With the exception of Russia, which expanded by land, imperial powers in Asia and Africa conducted their colonial affairs with a minimum of personnel: soldiers, administrators, businessmen, and in many cases missionaries. The typical agent of imperialism returned home after a tour of duty, becoming (in English parlance), a "nabob." Very few Europeans immigrated to sink roots and make permanent homes, with the primary exception of South Africa and to a lesser extent Rhodesia (today's Zimbabwe) and Algeria. The native populations exponentially outnumbered their colonial rulers and, in contrast to the natives of the Americas, did not die off from European diseases, to which they had developed immunities through centuries of pre-imperial contact. While miscegenation occurred, the impact was small in light of the ratio of native to European, South Africa and Algeria being major exceptions. And given European attitudes of

superiority, little effort was expended on acculturating natives to European norms beyond introducing Christianity in some areas.

When the Europeans withdrew from Africa and Asia in the twentieth century, whether after eighty or four hundred years, the peoples of most former colonies remained, culturally and racially, largely as they had been before the Europeans arrived. Those whom the Europeans converted to Christianity may be counted as a cultural exception. Even where imperial languages became official languages of the independent countries, as is common, they are the languages of government, business, and the elites that serve as bridges among the native tongues that most of the population continues to speak.

The other pattern of colonization played out in North America, Australia, and New Zealand—areas appropriated by the British. These regions were lightly populated by native peoples: Indians, Aborigines, and Maoris. They attracted mass immigration of Europeans, largely by family units of people seeking economic opportunity and/or religious freedom. In contrast to the Iberians, the British found no large populations of natives to exploit and had no obligation to convert those they found to Christianity. The natives constituted an obstacle to the immigrants' drive to occupy and exploit the land and other resources, so they were pushed back onto less desirable territories or killed. Upon achieving their independence, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand were predominantly European with relatively small native populations that had been displaced and marginalized and, in the United States, a substantial population of African origin.

Latin America followed neither of the above patterns. Spaniards and Portuguese encountered a great number and variety of natives, from those living in the great Aztec and Inca empires to primitive hunters and gatherers. They valued all these natives as potential labor, souls to save, and new subjects and sources of revenue for the crown. Rather than push them back, wherever possible, the Iberians incorporated them into the lower ranks of their developing hierarchical colonial societies. As occurred in Asia and Africa, the Iberian monarchs dispatched soldiers, administrators, and merchants, as well as clergy to implement their colonial designs in America. But in contrast to their European counterparts in most of Africa and Asia, many Spaniards and Portuguese immigrated to put down roots and stay: nearly a million Spaniards and around seven hundred thousand Portuguese through the colonial centuries. Their numbers then grew through reproduction to reach 3.2 million (or nearly 20 percent of Spanish America's population at the time of independence) and 1 million (or a quarter of Brazil's people at the same time). The only parts of the colonial world with larger percentages of European populations were British North America and Oceania.

The demographic makeup of colonial Latin America became more complex when, as the native population declined, the Portuguese, Spanish, and the French in Haiti turned to Africa for labor, as did the British in North America. The tricontinental heritage that characterizes Latin America, then, is shared by the United States, but even a casual examination reveals that the outcome of the complex interaction of

different peoples has varied. While miscegenation among the three races certainly occurred in North America, it appears to have been much less common than in Latin America. Furthermore, offspring of such liaisons were not recognized as belonging to new, distinct racial categories in North America as they were in Latin America. The terms *mestizo* or *mameluco*, mulatto, the general term *castas*, and dozens of subcategories of racial identity frankly recognized the outcomes of interracial sexual activity in Latin America and established a continuum of race rather than the unrealistic absolute categories of white, black, or Indian as used in the United States. (The U.S. Census Bureau's forms did not allow individuals to list more than one race until 2000.)

This cultural and genetic outcome of the era of European imperialism is what gives Latin America its unique place in the world. It is commonly said that a new race was created in Iberian America: European, Native American, and African melded into what José Vasconcelos, Mexican philosopher and minister of education in the 1920s, called the “cosmic race.” This is not to say that all Latin Americans are a mixture of the three—far from it. But census data tell us that a majority of Latin Americans today are of mixed race: European and Indian (*mestizo*), European and African (*mulatto*), Indian and African, or all three—further diversified in the postindependence period by immigration from non-Iberian Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. This “cosmic race,” a construct that is both genetic and cultural, continues to distinguish Latin America long after its colonial period ended.

This overview of Latin America's long colonial period examined the origins of five important legacies: authoritarian governance, the powerful Roman Catholic Church, a rigid social hierarchy, economic dependency, and the large landed estate. Throughout the remaining chapters of this book, we will follow these legacies, which played a central role in shaping today's Latin America, through two hundred years of postcolonial history.

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2. Miguel León-Portilla, ed., *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, expanded and updated ed., trans. Angel María Garibay K. and Lysander Kemp (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 44, 48.
3. Juan de Solórzano Pereira, *Política indiana*, 5 vols. (Madrid: Compañía Ibero-Americana de Publicaciones, 1930), in *Latin American Civilization: The Colonial Origins*, ed. Benjamin Keen, Vol. 1, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 237.

II

INDEPENDENCE AND ITS CHALLENGES, 1790s–1870s

2

The Independence of Latin America

The United States achieved independence from Britain in 1783, launching the first wave of liberation from European imperialism. Haiti won independence from France in 1804, and except for Cuba and Puerto Rico, Spanish and Portuguese America severed ties with their Iberian masters by 1825. Most of the remaining European colonies would follow suit in the aftermath of World War II. The first wave of independence, then, occurred in the Western Hemisphere. The second wave—involving Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Oceania—took place primarily between 1946 and 1975, with a few exceptions, ending the period when Europe claimed most of the world's territory.

BACKGROUND TO INDEPENDENCE

The royal houses of Spain and Portugal held their American empires for three centuries through bonds of traditional loyalty and institutional legitimacy—through their subjects' voluntary acceptance of, or at least acquiescence in, their kings' rule. While the colonials certainly complained about the royal administration and some of its policies, the traditional refrain, “long live the king, down with bad government,” described their long-standing relationship with their monarchs. Even Tupac Amaru, leader of the greatest native rebellion in the colonial period, took up arms in the name of the king and against royal officials' abusive practices. Spain and Portugal stationed only minimal military personnel in their colonies, and those soldiers were deployed to protect against European rivals or hostile Indians; they were not armies of occupation. Clearly, force was not the glue that kept the empires together.

By the late eighteenth century, the enduring bond between the colonials and their distant kings had begun to fray. One factor affecting the transatlantic relationship

was the simple passage of time: by 1775, some creoles and *mazombos* could trace their roots in America through ten or more generations; they were Peruvians, Brazilians, or Mexicans, and to most of them, Portugal and Spain were unknown, foreign places. Late-eighteenth-century policy changes stirred concern in both empires, both because of what they did and failed to do, and exacerbated long-standing tensions between colonials and the mother countries. Meanwhile, developments in the broader world introduced new ideas and provided examples that would eventually lead some among the elites to consider the radical notion of breaking with Spain and Portugal.

In Spain's domains, the Bourbon Reforms, which culminated under King Charles III (1759–1788), reorganized the colonies with three goals in mind: to tighten royal control, which had slipped particularly in the seventeenth century; to enhance the revenue of the Spanish crown and Spanish producers and merchants, in keeping with the original mercantilist goals of the colonial economy; and to prepare to defend the colonies militarily against encroaching European rivals, especially Britain and Russia. While moderately successful, the reforms created some discontent by raising taxes, reducing creole access to higher administrative positions, and expelling the Jesuit order that had educated many of the sons of the colonies' elites. Moreover, while liberalizing trade regulations, the crown stopped short of many colonials' aspiration of being able to trade legally with merchants from beyond the empire. Confident of their American subjects' loyalty, royal authorities reorganized and expanded the colonial militias to defend against foreign powers, inadvertently giving creoles a weapon that they would eventually use in pursuit of independence.

The eighteenth century was the Age of Enlightenment—a period of intellectual vitality and innovation centered in France and England that produced thinkers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, John Locke, and Adam Smith, whose ideas challenged the status quo in the political, economic, social, and religious realms. Realizing the potential danger in mainstream Enlightenment concepts, the Spanish crown attempted to control the literature that reached the colonies. Despite these efforts, ideas crossed oceans and borders and introduced educated creoles to subversive concepts such as unregulated economies and social compacts among men; some thinkers whose ideas reached America even challenged kings' divine right to rule with absolute power. While these intellectual currents influenced some of the colonial elites to contemplate the possibility of a future separate from their European monarchs, for most creoles, they were abstractions, not calls to action.

In Brazil, the *mazombo* elite experienced influences similar to those in Spanish America. Portuguese prime minister the Marquis de Pombal instituted changes that paralleled the Bourbon Reforms, creating additional royal monopolies, raising taxes on the colonials, and tightening Portuguese administrative control. Enacted during an economic downturn following the exhaustion of easily exploited gold fields, Pombal's reforms caused considerable resentment. *Mazombos* felt the influence of Enlightenment ideas but, as Brazil had neither a university nor a printing press, the impact was far weaker than in Spanish America.

Political developments in both the Western Hemisphere and Europe also shaped opinion in Brazil and Spanish America. The United States' independence from Britain proved that colonies could break from imperial rule and successfully manage their own affairs. Counterbalancing the influence of U.S. independence, however, were other events that provided cautionary tales about tampering with the status quo. The 1780–1782 Tupac Amaru native rebellion in the Andes, with its overtones of a race war, reminded not only Peruvians but also elites throughout the Iberian colonies of the social volcano atop which they sat, and dampened any inclination they may have had to start a movement of which they could easily lose control. The 1789 French Revolution brought dramatic political and social change, including the beheading of monarchs, aristocrats, and losers of political struggles; confiscation of properties of the wealthy; and persecution of the Catholic Church, raising a red flag for creoles and *mazombos* who had everything to lose in the event of such an upheaval. But nothing struck fear into the hearts of the colonial elites like the massive slave revolt in Haiti.

The second successful independence movement in the Western Hemisphere occurred in Haiti, then known as Saint Domingue, a French possession since 1697 that occupies the western third of the island of Española (or Hispaniola). Under French governance, Haiti had become a major producer of sugar for export. In the late eighteenth century, its population consisted of some forty thousand Europeans, thirty thousand free people of color, and half a million African slaves. With its seductive slogan of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” and its adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the French Revolution created a potentially explosive situation in the colony.

In August 1791, slaves rose under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture. Although France abolished slavery in 1794, the rebellion continued. L'Ouverture's troops controlled most of Saint Domingue by 1799, and most Europeans had been killed or driven out. After repelling a military expedition sent by Napoleon Bonaparte, France's new ruler, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, L'Ouverture's successor, formally declared Saint Domingue independent on January 1, 1804, under its original native Arawak name, Haiti. He also confirmed the abolition of slavery. These developments sent the unequivocal message that upsetting the status quo in Spanish America or Brazil could spell the end of the privileged life that the colonial elites had enjoyed for centuries.

Pulled in different directions by developments in the late eighteenth century, the elites of Brazil and Spanish America did little more than think or talk guardedly about changing their status vis-à-vis their imperial rulers. A few minor conspiracies were discovered and easily quelled by colonial authorities. It was neither attitudes nor events in America, but developments in Europe that set the forces of independence into motion.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, Napoleon came to power in the late 1790s, named himself emperor of France in 1804, and set out to conquer Europe. His strategy included subduing Britain, and to that end in 1806 he issued the Berlin

Haiti Today Fact Box



Area: 10,714 square miles
Population: 10,110,019
Population growth rate: 1.172%
Urban population: 58.6%
Ethnic composition: black 95%, mulatto and white 5%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 54.7%, Protestant 28.5%, voodoo 2.1%, Other 4.6% and none 10.2%

Life expectancy: 63.51 years

Literacy: 60.7%

Years of schooling (average): no data

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$1,800

Percentage of population living in poverty: 58.5%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 47.7% and lowest 0.7%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: no data

Internet users (percentage of total population): 11.6%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs, Internet).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

Decree, which required all countries on the European continent to boycott British goods. Portugal, economically tied to and militarily dependent on Britain, refused Napoleon's order. Having lost most of his fleet the previous year at Trafalgar, Napoleon could only invade the recalcitrant Portugal by land. Spanish minister Manuel de Godoy extended permission for Napoleon's troops to cross Spain, but when they arrived at Lisbon in late November 1807, they found that the Portuguese royal family, accompanied by ten to fifteen thousand people and the treasury, had sailed for Rio de Janeiro under the protection of the British navy. Turning his sights on Spain, Napoleon took advantage of political chaos and rioting caused by the abdication of Charles IV to his son Ferdinand VII and captured Madrid in March 1808. He then ordered the current and former kings to Bayonne, in southwestern France, where he held them captive. He placed his brother Joseph Bonaparte on the Spanish throne and, in the face of unexpectedly stiff resistance to the French usurpation, ordered his troops to conquer the entire kingdom.

The migration of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil and the usurpation of the Spanish crown profoundly impacted the relationship between metropole and colony, and unleashed events that would lead to the severance of the transatlantic bonds. While both Spanish America and Brazil achieved independence by the mid-1820s, they gained their freedom by very different routes.

SPAIN AND SPANISH AMERICA

The collapse of the Spanish monarchy stirred historic memory on both sides of the Atlantic and set off a dizzying chain of developments that both confused and politicized creoles. By ancient custom, in the absence of a legitimate monarch, power devolved to the king's or queen's subjects, who would govern themselves until his or her restoration or the succession of a legitimate heir. These subjects, of course, were the elites. In Spain, after some initial confusion, they established a junta, or temporary governing board, to rule in Ferdinand's absence; driven southward, the Junta Central convened in December 1808 in Seville, which was still free from French

control. Under military pressure, this body disbanded in January 1810 and created a Council of the Regency to govern until Ferdinand's restoration. Before dissolving, the Junta Central called for the revival of the ancient parliament, the *cortes*, which Isabella and Ferdinand had reined in but not formally abolished. Select representatives of the colonies were invited to participate in the *cortes*, which began meeting in still unconquered Cádiz in September 1810. The offer of colonial representation built expectations for a degree of equality between Spain and America, but the Spaniards refused colonial representatives' demands for an equal voice and for free trade. Further roiling transatlantic relations was the liberal 1812 constitution produced by the *cortes*, which limited the powers of the monarchy and called for some creole participation in governance in the colonies. By 1812, however, impatient colonials had begun taking things into their own hands.

INDEPENDENCE IN MEXICO

The unimaginable evaporation of the traditional transatlantic tie and the rapid-fire succession of developments in Spain caused confusion and conflict in the colonies. Rather than accept Joseph, the Junta Central, the Council of the Regency, or Spanish officials in America as legitimate authorities, some creoles in administrative centers considered themselves the appropriate rulers in their jurisdictions and proposed establishing juntas to govern in Ferdinand's name until his restoration. Conservative creoles and Spaniards, while disagreeing over which Spanish authority to recognize, opposed the devolution of power to colonial subjects. In Mexico, the two years following Napoleon's invasion saw political instability approaching chaos as Spaniards, creoles, and officials sent to Mexico by the competing authorities in Spain jockeyed for position. A short-lived junta was formed but dispersed by Spaniards in Mexico City, and a pro-independence conspiracy was disrupted in Valladolid in 1809. Another conspiracy unfolded in Querétaro.

The Querétaro group, constituted as a "literary club," included creole military men; a former *corregidor* and his wife, Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez (known as *la corregidora*); several others of varied backgrounds; and the creole priest Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla. When news of their conspiracy to rebel reached the authorities, some plotters were arrested while others decided to act immediately. Father Hidalgo rang the bells of his church and gathered his parishioners in the largely Indian town of Dolores early on the morning of September 16, 1810, and gave his fateful *Grito de Dolores*, crying out "Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe, death to the Spaniards." Although he did not declare independence, September 16 is celebrated as Mexico's independence day.

Intentionally or not, Father Hidalgo's *grito* evoked the Indians' experience with colonialism: three centuries of exploitation and humiliation at the hands of Europeans, whether Spaniards or creoles, and deep devotion to the dark virgin who had appeared a decade after the fall of the Aztec Empire to offer hope and consolation



Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla

Source: Library of Congress

to the defeated and downtrodden survivors. Armed with sticks, stones, and other improvised weapons, the crowd of Indians and mestizos attacked and sacked two nearby towns before setting out for the rich silver-mining city of Guanajuato, gathering forces and killing light-skinned people as they went. Upon learning of the mob's approach, hundreds of creoles and Spaniards took refuge in the public granary, but the enraged rebels burned down the gates and slaughtered over three hundred of those sheltering inside, then continued to maraud through the city. Eighteen-year-old Lucas Alamán, who would have a distinguished career in politics and letters, wrote of the scene in Guanajuato: "This pillage was more merciless than would have been expected of a foreign army."¹

After the events in Guanajuato, Father Hidalgo and coconspirator Ignacio Allende led their untrained and haphazardly armed followers to the major cities of Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, and Valladolid. With some eighty thousand men, they then turned toward Mexico City. A royalist militia unit temporarily stopped the rebels and led to large-scale desertions. Assessing their forces' lack of military preparation and arms, and perhaps contemplating the blood bath that would have ensued if they attacked the seat of Spanish power, Hidalgo and Allende retreated and split their forces. Hidalgo's dwindling group was defeated near Guadalajara, and he and Allende retreated northward. Both were captured and executed. The heads of Hidalgo, Allende, and two other rebels were displayed in cages placed on the four corners of the Guanajuato granary for ten years as a warning against further rebellion.

Following Hidalgo's and Allende's deaths, another priest, the mestizo José María Morelos y Pavón, took up the cause of independence and social justice. He developed a fairly disciplined army and, after capturing substantial territory, called in September 1813 for a congress to be held in Chilpancingo (in today's Guerrero state) to formalize his movement's goals and appeal for broader support. Morelos invoked the Aztec past and submitted a document that he called "sentimientos de la nación" (sentiments of the nation), whose twenty-three points laid out a radical vision for an independent Mexico: abolition of slavery, the tribute, torture, and legal distinctions based on race; expulsion of Spaniards and confiscation of their property; and a republican form of government with executive, legislative, and judicial branches and universal male suffrage. Reflecting his religious vocation, Morelos's document made Catholicism the official and exclusive religion of independent Mexico, but required priests to administer the sacraments free of charge. Harried by royalist troops, the congress moved to Apatzingán where it promulgated a constitution that laid out a framework for government but failed to include Morelos's social program.

Within a few months of the Chilpancingo congress, Napoleon was driven from Spain and Ferdinand returned to claim the throne in March 1814. With Spanish troops freed from the European wars, Ferdinand was able to reinforce the modest military presence in Mexico, and Morelos was captured and executed in December 1815. A few men kept alive an ineffectual guerrilla campaign for independence, but sobered by the racial and social hatred and violence of Hidalgo's uprising and by the Chilpancingo program, most creoles welcomed the continuation of Mexico's colonial status quo. Yet when an 1820 military revolt in Spain succeeded and restored the liberal 1812 constitution, which Ferdinand had abolished, both conservative creoles and resident Spaniards concluded that their interests were no longer served by Mexico's subordination to an unstable master.

When the country achieved independence in 1821, it was under the conservative leadership of a creole military officer, Agustín de Iturbide, who persuaded some of the rebel groups to join him in common cause. His Plan of Iguala essentially called for the colonial system to remain unchanged after the severance of political ties to Spain. The plan had three points: Mexico would be governed by an invited European monarch, the Catholic Church would retain its monopoly and privileges, and Spaniards who stayed in Mexico would enjoy the same rights as creoles. Facing a united pro-independence force, the Spanish viceroy recognized Mexican sovereignty in the Treaty of Córdoba of August 24, 1821, and Iturbide maneuvered himself onto the promised throne a few months later.

The visions of Morelos and Iturbide for Mexico could hardly have differed more. Except for Morelos's position on religion, they framed the nineteenth-century liberal-conservative political debate. No mainstream Mexican liberal embraced all of Morelos's platform, and after the collapse of Iturbide's 10-month reign, conservatives reluctantly abandoned their commitment to monarchy. Nonetheless, the ideological and programmatic differences between Morelos and Iturbide—between liberals and conservatives—would lead to instability, dictatorships, civil wars, and ultimately

to the French occupation of Mexico in the 1860s. Such issues and divisions also plagued most of the other new Spanish American republics for the first half-century after independence.

CENTRAL AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

In Central America, independence resulted largely from developments external to the region. Central America was governed as the Captaincy General of Guatemala, which was subordinate to the viceroyalty of New Spain. The captaincy general in turn was subdivided into regional administrative units, the intendancies, which would later define national boundaries. The collapse of the Spanish monarchy and of Hidalgo's and Morelos's rebellions alerted creoles to the prospect of independence and led to minor revolts and a serious conspiracy in the capital, Guatemala City. But it was Mexico's independence under Iturbide that galvanized the Central American elites to action.

As news from Mexico spread through the region, leading creoles challenged the Spanish authorities. They convened in Guatemala City on September 15, 1821, and on the same day declared independence from Spain. Independence was ephemeral, however, as Iturbide reestablished the colonial chain of authority by annexing Central America to his Mexican Empire. With the collapse of Iturbide's brief regime, Central America again declared independence on July 1, 1823, and adopted a federal constitution as the United Provinces of Central America. The region thus escaped the warfare that seriously damaged parts of Mexico and Spanish South America in their quest for independence.

INDEPENDENCE WARS IN SPANISH SOUTH AMERICA

Independence in Spanish South America followed still different patterns. The first short-lived junta was formed in September 1808 in Montevideo. Two more followed in 1809, in La Paz and Quito, both controlled by creoles determined to run local affairs, until royalist military forces dispersed them. But by 1810, despite resistance from Spanish authorities, resident Spaniards, and conservative creoles, juntas had been established in Caracas, Buenos Aires, Bogotá, Santiago de Chile, and a second one in Quito. While professing loyalty to Ferdinand, the juntas began making policy decisions for their jurisdictions, including enactment of the long-held creole aspiration of free trade.

Buenos Aires and Caracas were the epicenters of the South American independence movements. In Buenos Aires, capital of the new viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata established in 1776 as part of the Bourbon reforms, destabilization of Spanish rule began even prior to Napoleon's invasion of Spain. When a British expedition captured the city in June 1806, the viceroy fled and an improvised, creole-led force

drove the British out, in the process giving locals a taste of power. Irregular and militia units defeated a second British invasion the following year. Thus when the rupture of legitimate authority occurred in 1808, Buenos Aires's creoles were experienced and confident of their ability to rule in the king's name, and after two years of jockeying among appointed viceroys, Spaniards, and creoles, the latter formed a junta on May 25, 1810. Although independence was not formally declared until 1816, Spain never regained control of the future Argentina. But the efforts of Buenos Aires to control the entire territory of the viceroyalty failed. Creoles in La Paz and Asunción repelled military expeditions from Buenos Aires, laying the basis for the future republics of Bolivia and Paraguay. Uruguayans also fought to escape Buenos Aires's domination, only to fall under Brazilian control until a British-brokered compromise created the independent republic of Uruguay in 1828.

Caracas was the capital of a captaincy-general subordinate to the viceroyalty of New Granada in Bogotá, which had been carved out of the viceroyalty of Peru in 1739. Caracas was the scene of the most aggressive push for outright independence in Spanish America. In 1806, Francisco Miranda, a radical creole advocate of independence, led a small army comprised largely of U.S. volunteers in an unsuccessful invasion. After the fall of the Spanish monarchy, however, Venezuelan creoles became receptive to self-rule. Following three failed attempts to establish a junta, Caracas creoles overthrew the Spanish administration in April 1810, began making policy, and convened a congress that issued Spanish America's first formal declaration of independence in July 1811. In contrast to Buenos Aires, Spanish forces attacked the new republic and captured Miranda, leaving Simón Bolívar as leader of the pro-independence forces.

Bolívar retreated westward to New Granada proper, from where he carried out a successful invasion of Venezuela in 1813. His hold on Venezuela was never secure, and by the following year, royalist guerrillas drove him back to New Granada. The release of Spanish troops from the Napoleonic wars in 1814 was a turning point in Bolívar's fortunes. Spanish General Pablo Morillo finished the reconquest of Venezuela and New Granada in 1815, carrying out serious reprisals against patriots, including the execution of at least three hundred men, and driving Bolívar into exile in British Jamaica.

Meanwhile in southern South America, Chile had become increasingly autonomous since 1810 without proclaiming independence. The junta established a congress, and after dissolving that body, strongman José Miguel Carrera promulgated a constitution and adopted a flag for Chile in 1812, while still proclaiming loyalty to Ferdinand. When the viceroy in Lima dispatched a sizeable force to put down the Chileans, Bernardo O'Higgins replaced Carrera as military leader of the patriot forces. However, a Spanish victory at the battle of Rancagua in 1814 forced O'Higgins, Carrera, and others to seek refuge across the Andes in the interior of Argentina, which remained in patriot hands. In Chile, as in northern South America, the Spanish reconquest was carried out with considerable brutality; colonial restrictions on trade were reimposed and reprisals were harsh, driving many reluctant



Simón Bolívar's statue in Caracas

Source: Library of Congress and Bain News Service

creoles who had earlier opposed self-rule in Ferdinand's name into the camp of full independence.

Beginning in 1817, the military fortunes of the independence forces brightened. O'Higgins returned from exile reinforced by the chief Argentine military leader, General José de San Martín, and his troops. Together the Chileans and Argentines inflicted two successive defeats on Spanish armies, securing Chile's independence at the battle of Maipú in 1818. San Martín then turned his attention to Peru. Peruvian creoles had not followed the lead of their fellows in most of Spanish South America by forming a junta. Living in the heart of the former Inca Empire among a strong majority of Indians, and with memory of the bloody Tupac Amaru rebellion still strong, they were leery of disturbing the status quo. Moreover, as capital of the viceroyalty, Lima was more heavily garrisoned than most points of South America. However, when San Martín reached Lima in 1820 with a large army, the Spanish forces withdrew to the Andean highlands. The Argentine declared Peru's independence in 1821.

As Chile and Peru were being liberated, Bolívar's fortunes also improved. Returning from his Jamaica exile, he reconquered parts of Venezuela before delivering a crushing defeat on the Spanish at Boyacá, effectively liberating New Granada. He then returned to Venezuela, defeating the Spanish at Carabobo in 1821 and securing his homeland's independence. He dispatched his lieutenant and fellow Venezuelan Antonio José de Sucre to liberate Ecuador the following year. Both Venezuela and



Battle of Las Queseras del Medio, Venezuela, 1819

Source: Library of Congress

Ecuador were incorporated into the independent Republic of Gran Colombia, under Bolívar's leadership.

In July 1822, the two primary liberators of South America met in Guayaquil. Historians have long wished that notes had been kept or declarations issued, but neither happened. Underlying differences over the forms of future governments—Bolívar favored republics while San Martín advocated constitutional monarchies—must have been a primary focus of their discussions. Moreover, Bolívar had the military momentum. San Martín stepped aside, resigned his position in Peru, and went into exile in Europe, where he lived until his death in 1850. Bolívar and Sucre then moved to consolidate patriot control in Peru, which Sucre secured by defeating the last viceroy of Spain's American empire at Ayacucho in December 1824. That battle left only Upper Peru in Spanish hands, but with his power already crumbling, the Spanish commander was defeated and killed by Sucre's forces in April 1825. The grateful residents named their new republic after Bolívar and their capital city after Sucre. The Spanish garrison at Lima's port of Callao surrendered in January 1826, and the independence of mainland Spanish America was complete.

In South America, African slaves were among the combatants at all stages of the independence wars. Both the Spanish and the patriot sides recruited slaves by offering them freedom, and thousands of slaves won their freedom through military service. Women were also active on the patriot side. In addition to *la corregidora* in Mexico, Manuela Cañizares was instrumental in forming the brief 1809 junta in Quito. Women served in combat, sometimes dressed as men. They proved their mettle as artillery gunners on Margarita Island off Venezuela, where they were essential

in repelling a Spanish assault, and served troops as nurses, cooks, and gatherers of supplies. But whereas enlisting as fighters led to substantive changes in the status of slave combatants, women generally did not benefit from their service.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF BRAZIL

Brazil's independence from Portugal came about in yet a different manner. As a result of the Portuguese court's migration from Lisbon to Brazil, Rio de Janeiro was designated the temporary capital of the Portuguese Empire. Prince Regent João (King João VI beginning in 1816) quickly enacted changes that altered Brazil's status as



Latin America in 1829.

a colony. Chief among these were the establishment of free trade with all countries and the abolition of restrictions on manufacturing products that competed with Portuguese goods. Rather than returning home following Napoleon's defeat, João elevated Brazil to a kingdom equal to Portugal, thereby formally ending Brazil's colonial status.

With the benefits of becoming imperial capital came costs, chief among them the growth of resentment among the Brazilian elites over the favored treatment and luxurious life styles of the Portuguese court. Yet, it was not events in Brazil but developments in Portugal that led to independence. Aggrieved by the king's refusal to return home, Portuguese liberals formed juntas in 1820 and convened a *cortes* to write a liberal constitution. To Brazilians' consternation, the *cortes* approved the reestablishment of colonial economic restrictions and reinforced the Portuguese military presence in Brazil. Facing this political turmoil and challenges to his authority, King João returned home in 1821, leaving his son Dom Pedro as regent of the Brazilian kingdom. As tensions rose over Portuguese pretensions to reestablish colonial control over Brazil, the *cortes* in January 1822 demanded that Pedro also return, but he refused. A few months later, Portuguese authorities caught up with Pedro on the banks of the Ipiranga River where, on September 7, 1822, he proclaimed "Independence or death"—his famous *Grito de Ipiranga*. Brazil achieved independence peacefully and remained under the Braganza dynasty through most of the nineteenth century.

THE CHALLENGES OF INDEPENDENCE

Even before the euphoria of independence wore off, leaders of the new countries began to grapple with serious challenges. In those areas where military action had been widespread and prolonged, an immediate task was to promote recovery from war damages. In large parts of South America and Mexico, passing armies commonly appropriated cattle and crops to feed themselves and wrecked agricultural infrastructure, reducing the productive capacity of large estates and Indian communities. Merchants and other individuals possessing wealth frequently found their goods and capital confiscated to support patriots and royalists alike. In mining zones, particularly Mexico and the Andean region, essential equipment was destroyed, most importantly the pumps that kept the deep shafts free of flooding. Once flooded, these mines ceased production, greatly reducing several countries' major source of export income.

Capital flight and contracting government revenues posed other economic problems. Spaniards were among the wealthiest merchants, and many of them fled the war-torn colonies, taking their liquid capital with them to Spain or Cuba, which remained a Spanish colony until 1898. The colonial taxation system, particularly unpopular since the Bourbon Reforms had raised the levy on colonials, became a

matter of controversy. In some areas, creoles lowered or abolished some of the taxes they paid, leaving the new governments financially crippled.

The new authorities faced the major challenge of dealing with the thousands of men who had participated in the independence wars, some of whom had been under arms for a decade or more. Included among these soldiers were former slaves whom both sides had recruited by offering them freedom. Other men had been displaced from the damaged haciendas and the shuttered mines. Neither former slaves nor displaced workers had livelihoods to return to, and the new independent governments lacked the resources to offer cash bonuses in order to demobilize them; nor could they offer land, as was done in the aftermath of the U.S. independence war, as most productive land was claimed. These former independence fighters, many of them still armed, implicitly threatened governmental stability as they might readily be mobilized by dissident leaders promising rewards. The existence of former fighters without means of support was exacerbated by the *fuero militar*, the arrangement by which all men in the military or militias enjoyed the right to be tried in special military courts for any infraction, including civil offenses. This colonial inheritance meant in practice that military men were not subject to civilian control and had the potential to become autonomous predatory groups.

The colonial legacy of a rigid social hierarchy complicated the problem of demobilizing independence fighters. Although some barriers to social mobility were broken down, the hierarchy based on race, color, and gender remained essentially intact following independence. The mass of Indians, people of African descent, and *castas* had very little to call their own, and thus little to lose and the possibility of gain when a leader appeared promising rewards for their participation in an assault on an existing government.

Regionalism was another practical issue facing the new countries. Creoles in the colonial administrative centers assumed that their control over the outlying areas of those jurisdictions would be respected as an inheritance of the royal administration, but they failed almost everywhere. As noted, the former viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata fragmented. Centrifugal forces would fracture the former viceroyalty of New Granada into three republics. The viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico) lost Central America, and the initially unified government of Central America split into five republics in 1838. In some areas, regionalism was also based on economic conflicts between the principal city and the hinterlands. Exacerbated by the rugged topography and the primitive road systems throughout Spanish America, regionalism continued for decades to thwart governments' efforts to exercise effective control over their national territories. Regionalism was also a destabilizing force in Brazil's early independent history.

Another factor challenging new governments was the demarcation of national boundaries. During the colonial period, exact borders within Spanish America were unimportant, as all jurisdictions were ruled ultimately from Spain. As a result of

unclear boundaries between the colonial administrative units, successor national governments were left to determine the contours of their territories, often resulting in armed conflict with their neighbors—a phenomenon that continued sporadically through the twentieth century.

In addition to such practical matters that burdened the new countries, ideological divisions made consensus on fundamental issues difficult to achieve. The Enlightenment had challenged the status quo in general, and by the time of independence, there was a clear division between liberals and conservatives, and significant ranges within each group. In general terms, conservatives stood for as little change as possible from colonial institutions and practices. They supported authoritarian government, retaining the Catholic Church's powers and monopoly of religion, and keeping the colonial social hierarchy intact. Liberals generally opposed authoritarian government and the Catholic Church's power and monopoly, and some favored altering the social hierarchy by abolishing slavery and eliminating the tribute—the colonial head tax on Indians.

The broadly defined ideological differences between conservatives and liberals translated into rival concepts of how government should be structured. Conservatives preferred a strong executive power and centralized government, similar to the colonial regime, and favored severely restricted suffrage based on property and literacy, or both. Liberals endorsed a strong legislative branch to restrain the executive and broader suffrage—although few advocated extending the vote to Indians, former slaves, illiterates, or women. Some embraced federalism to distribute power away from the capital to the provinces. Disagreement over whether to preserve or dismantle the colonial regime and over the structure of government fueled controversy that commonly disrupted governmental continuity and prevented the establishment of stable and effective governments.

By adopting institutions alien to the Latin American tradition, the new countries added to the difficulty in finding a workable formula for effective governance. With the exception of Brazil and briefly of Mexico, all the new countries entered independent life as republics. The ascendancy of the republican idea in Latin America—at a time when monarchy still held sway in Europe, and the United States, Haiti, and only a handful of other republics existed in the world—resulted primarily from the independence struggle itself. The initial colonial response to Napoleon's usurpation of the Spanish crown—the establishment of juntas governing in Ferdinand's name—demonstrated the colonials' continuing loyalty not only to the king but also to the institution of monarchy. Moreover, prior to Ferdinand's restoration, only the Caracas and Bogotá juntas along with Morelos in Mexico had rejected the crown by declaring independence. But Ferdinand's response to the actions his American subjects had taken during his captivity was a turning point. By reestablishing the colonial restrictions on trade and ending the limited creole participation in governance established by recent practice and by the 1812 constitution, Ferdinand rolled back the gains that the creoles had made after 1808. The attempted restoration of royal

absolutism after creoles had tasted self-governance turned many of them against the king and raised doubts about the absolute power that kings traditionally exercised. And the bloody retribution meted out by the troops that Ferdinand sent to America to restore his rule, not only on the few who had dared to declare independence but also on the many who had not done so, further disillusioned colonials with the king and with the institution of monarchy itself and made the republican idea appealing.

The new countries adopted another institution that was alien to their history: constitutions. At the time of the Latin American independence movements, written constitutions were new. The first of these was the U.S. Articles of Confederation (1777) and the second the U.S. Constitution (1787). Shortly thereafter, successive French revolutionary governments adopted three constitutions in the 1790s. Latin American leaders of course were familiar with the liberal Spanish Constitution of 1812. All of these written constitutions limited the powers of the executive, whether of presidents or kings. Since from the creole perspective Ferdinand had abused his absolute power in returning Spanish America to colonial status, the idea of adopting constitutions was attractive to many of the new countries' leaders. Even monarchist Brazil adopted a constitution as early as 1824.

Although many constitutions failed because they were copies of foreign documents or for other reasons did not conform to national realities, they carried a powerful mystique. It was as if constitutions were magical instruments that would create general happiness and well-being—none more so than Chile's 1823 constitution, whose article 250 dictated: "Included in the legislation of the state will be the moral code that will detail the duties of the citizen at all ages and in all states of his social life, thus forming in him habits, exercises, duties, rituals, and pleasures that will transform the law into customs and the customs into civic and moral virtues."² The frequency with which some of the early republics changed constitutions did not reflect a cavalier attitude toward them, but the opposite—a strong feeling that constitutions were necessary and essential to defining leaders' visions and goals for the country.

The constitutions of the new republics established governments consisting of three separate powers: executive, judicial, and legislative. The third branch was new to Latin Americans: Having lived under absolute monarchs, they had no experience with making laws beyond mundane municipal regulations. But the U.S., French, and Spanish constitutions had included legislative powers, and many creoles had been introduced to the making of policy decisions as members of juntas in America or in the *cortes* of Cádiz. Moreover, the reimposition of royal absolutism under Ferdinand underscored the value and importance of elected legislative bodies to check the power invested in any executive. National legislatures were often ignored, trampled upon, or disbanded in the new countries, but the idea of citizen legislatures would persist.

These practical and ideological impediments to establishing stable and effective political institutions were exacerbated by an even more profound challenge: creation

of legitimate authority, meaning authority accepted by citizens, or rule with the consent of the governed. The authority of Spanish kings had been legitimate, even when certain of the kings' personnel or policies were widely disliked, at least until the Enlightenment raised doubts among a few intellectuals. How could new legitimate governments be constructed following the evaporation of the traditional legitimacy of kings' rule? This was a matter of paramount importance.

Simón Bolívar offered insights into what was missing in the Spanish American colonial experience that could have facilitated the creation of governmental legitimacy and eased the transition from colony to republic. In a letter he wrote in 1815 to an acquaintance during his exile in Jamaica, known as the Jamaica letter, Bolívar pointed to a phenomenon common to almost all colonies, regardless of place or time: the absence of political experience. "The role of the inhabitants of the American hemisphere [in the Iberian colonies] has for centuries been purely passive. Politically they were nonexistent. We have been harassed by a conduct which has not only deprived us of our rights but has kept us in a sort of permanent infancy with regard to public affairs. We were cut off and, as it were, removed from the world in relation to the science of government and administration of the state."³

Bolívar clearly understood the difference between the Spanish and the English colonies regarding political experience and participation: "If we could at least have managed our domestic affairs and our internal administration, we could have acquainted ourselves with the processes and mechanics of public affairs." Had that opportunity existed, he insisted, Latin Americans might have acquired "the abilities and political virtues that distinguish our brothers of the north" and, by extension, been able to construct governmental institutions that citizens would have embraced as legitimate.⁴

What Bolívar recognized was the result of the opposite trajectories followed by England and Iberia, especially Spain, from the Middle Ages onward. While Spain evolved into absolute monarchy, as begun by Isabella and Ferdinand, England was moving away from all-powerful monarchs toward representative government. Although representation in parliament was limited to the elites until the nineteenth century, English colonists in America invoked their "rights as Englishmen" to establish deliberative and decision-making bodies in each of the thirteen colonies. These bodies—with names such as the House of Burgesses, the Assembly of Freemen, and the House of Delegates—did essentially what Bolívar lamented that the Spanish colonials had been prohibited from doing: They ran their own affairs, without serious interference from the king or his representatives. It was precisely the assertion of royal power under King George III that led to U.S. independence. And that practice of self-governance, the "science of government and administration of the state" as Bolívar called it, was the foundation of a relatively smooth transition from colony to independent republic in the United States. The lack of that practice would greatly complicate the transition from colony to independent country in Latin America.

The same would hold true of the great majority of former European colonies in Asia and Africa that won their independence after World War II.

Most of Latin America, along with the United States, secured its independence during the first wave of decolonization, 1783–1825. Developments in the imperial countries sparked uprisings in Haiti and much of Spanish America, where juntas initially loyal to King Ferdinand eventually chose to sever ties with Spain. Haiti, Mexico, and Spanish South America gained independence through war, while Central America and Brazil achieved independence peacefully. Independent Brazil remained under the Portuguese Braganza dynasty, while after Mexico's brief experiment with monarchy, all of Spanish America became republics. As with almost all former colonies, Latin America faced major challenges of governance and economic development.

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3

The Age of Caudillos

Independent Latin America faced daunting challenges. One of the primary problems was economic: how to recover from the wars of independence in most of Spanish South America and Mexico, and then how to promote economic development in general. Another was political: how to construct institutions of governance that functioned and provided stability and continuity. The two challenges intersected and reinforced each other. Poverty bred instability, as individuals and groups fought over national treasuries that, if not bare, could not satisfy all competing claims. And instability prolonged poverty, as the climate of violence and lack of continuity in national governments and their policies discouraged the foreign capital needed for investment in productive activities.

Latin America faced the same challenges that, regardless of place or time, plagued almost all former European colonies in their early postindependence years. Their economies were structured to benefit the European colonizers, not the native populations. And European masters did not prepare their colonial subjects for independence, as they intended to rule them in perpetuity. Thus, with only a few exceptions, former colonies were unable to make smooth transitions; the travails of the first half-century of independence in Latin America were the norm, not the exception, for new countries around the globe. Moreover, as Simón Bolívar noted, they were predictable.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ISSUES

Latin America's newly independent countries faced severe economic problems. As governments did not begin the modern practice of compiling statistics until late in the nineteenth century, the economic picture is murky. Nonetheless, it is clear that

the late colonial economy by and large transcended independence, with three basic changes: In areas where independence wars were fought, destruction of mines and agriculture set back production significantly; many wealthy Spaniards and Portuguese left and took their capital with them; and finally, although the colonial restrictions on trade were in tatters by the late eighteenth century, with independence the shift of trading partners to Britain was completed. The British aggressively sought favorable terms with the new countries, including low tariffs, or import taxes, on their manufactures and “most favored nation” status, meaning that no other country’s products would pay lower tariffs.

Recovery from the independence wars was uneven. Agriculture and cattle herds recovered in most places within a few years, but silver mining—which had been the mainstay of the economies of Mexico and Upper Peru (now Bolivia) and important elsewhere—required decades to reach colonial levels of output; Mexico recovered by the 1850s, Bolivia not until the 1870s. Few new export products were developed other than coffee, which began to register by the 1840s in Brazil and Central America, and guano, or nitrate-rich bird droppings found on islands off the Peruvian coast, which brought substantial wealth to the Peruvian government and the capitalists who extracted the material that was in great demand in Europe as fertilizer.

The capital shortage was difficult to overcome, and few countries managed to secure enough capital to promote development. Investors from Britain, the greatest source of capital at the time of independence, experienced negative results. They sought to modernize silver mines by introducing steam power, but political instability and difficult transportation from port to mines ruined these plans and discouraged future investment. Several of the patriot regimes received loans to finance the independence wars, and governments of the independent countries also secured financing to stay afloat. But by the late 1820s, many debtor governments defaulted, and thus few new loans were offered until past mid-century. Brazil, with its peaceful transition to independence and relative governmental stability, was able to attract more capital earlier than most of the Spanish American republics.

Another major factor in the failure to recover and foster economic development was the inability of the new republics to establish viable, stable institutions of governance. In many countries, rapid turnover in office was the norm, meaning that continuity in policy was impossible. This instability reduced the possibility of attracting foreign investment or loans, as a contract signed by one administration might be cancelled by the next or confirmed only for a hefty bribe. Further, many of the turnovers in office were carried out by military uprisings, which often involved destruction of property and disruption of transportation. This political failure contributed importantly to economic failure, and the postindependence period was characterized by economic stagnation or regression until the 1850s, when signs of increased economic activity began to appear.

Developments in several countries illustrate the challenge of establishing effective and durable political institutions. Between 1821 and 1845, Peru experienced twenty-four regime changes (an average of one per year), and by 1860 had had two rival presidents on more than one occasion, fought three foreign wars, and adopted

ten constitutions. Chile adopted eight constitutions between 1812 and 1833 (or one every 2.7 years), and experienced innumerable revolts and two civil wars by 1859. Ecuador enacted six constitutions its first twenty-two years of independence and engaged in several border wars with New Granada (today's Colombia). In addition to losing Bolivia and Paraguay, Argentina broke into sixteen disunited, autonomous provinces that were not effectively unified until 1852. Bolivia's Manuel Isidoro Belzú (1848–1855) may have set the record for surviving the most coup attempts against a sitting president: forty-two in seven years.

Two countries illustrate particularly well the challenges accompanying independence. The birth of the Dominican Republic, known as Santo Domingo under Spanish rule, was painful. Toussaint L'Ouverture and his black troops overran Santo Domingo during the Haitian slave rebellion of the 1790s. In 1795, Spain ceded Santo Domingo to France but regained control of its colony in 1809. In November 1821, a few months after Agustín de Iturbide proclaimed Mexico's independence, a group of Dominicans declared the colony independent. The following year, Haitian forces invaded the new republic and controlled it for the next twenty-two years. Dominicans won independence from Haiti in 1844, only to be reoccupied by Spain between 1861 and 1865. Facing a history of vulnerability to foreign domination, fearing further Haitian aggression, and seeking stability and improved economic conditions, Dominican leaders next sought annexation by the United States—a move forestalled by rejection in the U.S. Senate in 1870 (Chapter 6). The Dominican Republic's stumbles following independence describe the history of a country that almost wasn't.

Mexico also faced formidable obstacles to a smooth transition from colony to independent country. Its experiment with monarchy lasted only ten months. In the next fifty years, the country had thirty different presidents and over seventy different presidential administrations. One individual, Antonio López de Santa Anna, held the office eleven times between 1833 and 1855. The country experienced so many rebellions that leaders adopted the custom of naming their uprisings for the place where they announced their rebellion and laid out their "plan" for change: for example, the Plan de Casa Mata (1823) and the Plan de Ayutla (1854), among many. One of these uprisings devolved into a bloody and costly four-year civil war. Mexico was invaded by Spain and twice by France. Central America, originally part of independent Mexico, broke away in 1823. After losing Texas in 1836, Mexico lost half its remaining territory in the U.S.–Mexican War of 1846–1848. Finally, in 1862, the country was invaded by a French army that installed an Austrian emperor who ruled from 1864 to 1867. This was not an auspicious beginning for a new country.

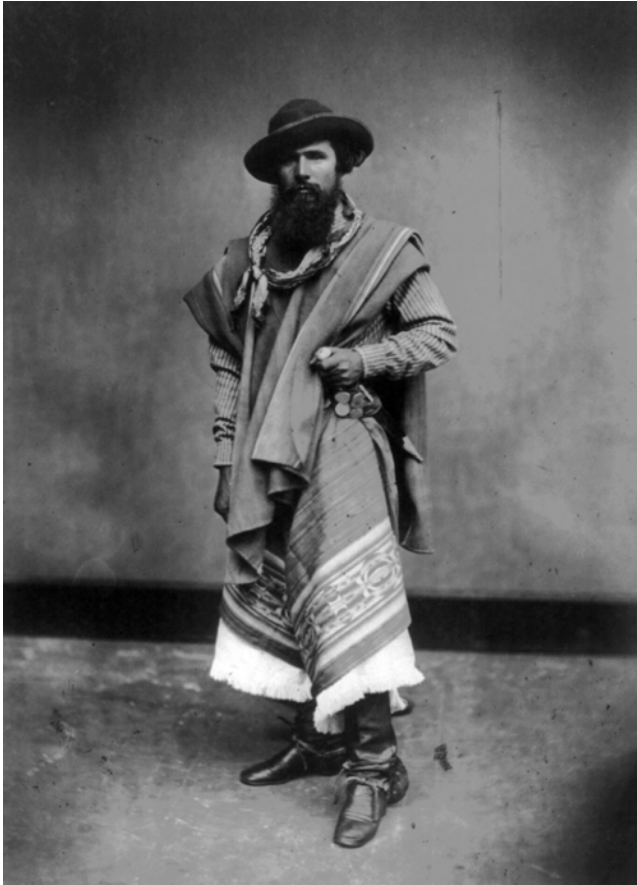
THE CAUDILLOS

In the absence of functioning institutions of governance, men known as caudillos dominated the political life of the new republics. At any given time, there might be a

caudillo president, caudillo regional chieftains, and would-be caudillos waiting in the wings for an opportunity to seize power at some level. On the other hand, the most successful caudillos were able to consolidate their power and rule their countries for decades. While caudillos were omnipresent, they were not the root cause of the problems besetting Latin America. Rather, they were a symptom of the challenges of independence that could not be overcome. The economic stagnation of the period and the inability to construct workable institutions of government—the vacuum of legitimate power created by the collapse of royal authority—made room for caudillos to rise to power.

There is no universally accepted definition of a caudillo; the closest appropriate English terms may be “strongman” or “warlord.” Most caudillos had several characteristics in common. They embodied the colonial legacy of authoritarian governance. They were charismatic, and many enhanced their charismatic appeal by developing cults of personality that exalted them. Some identified with the common people, even if they were from a higher social class, and excelled at the manly traits of fighting, riding, drinking, and carousing. Others effected aristocratic traits and placed themselves above their countrymen. Caudillos tolerated no political opposition, and either co-opted potential rivals or persecuted them. When in power, they normally reduced their country’s legislature and courts to rubber-stamp status or disbanded them. Most, but not all, caudillos during this time came from a military background in the colonial militias or the independence wars. If not grounded in a formal military institution, they rose through the ranks of informal fighting units such as the *montoneros* of the Argentine pampas or the *llaneros* of the Venezuelan plains. With some exceptions, caudillos did not represent ideologies or political principles, except occasionally for convenience. They represented themselves and their followers, and seized and held power for its own sake and to enrich themselves and reward their supporters.

Since there were far too many caudillos for all to be discussed, we will select a few representative individuals for analysis. Let us begin with Argentina, where caudillos ruled from 1820 to 1852. As noted above, the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, as independent Argentina was initially named, were in reality disunited after the fifteen provinces of the interior rebelled against an 1819 draft constitution that centralized power in the capital, Buenos Aires. Underlying this rebellion, which led to the proliferation of caudillos, was the interior’s opposition to the colonial pattern of centralized rule—the same impulse that had led earlier to Bolivian, Paraguayan, and Uruguayan rejection of Buenos Aires’s dominance. Fundamental economic issues were also critical. The elites of Buenos Aires—the principal port for all of Argentina—favored free trade, as they would control and profit from the flow of goods in and out of the country. Free trade, however, threatened the artisan producers of textiles, ironwork, and handicrafts in the interior, who demanded high tariffs for protection from cheaper, factory-produced imports.



Argentine gaucho, 1860s
Source: Library of Congress

Throughout the vast interior, a territory populated by millions of wild cattle and a handful of people, caudillos arose and seized control of the provincial governments. Most were rough-and-ready plainsmen, or gauchos, who were unlettered and unrefined but intent on protecting their provinces and their personal interests. Their supporters were mainly gauchos who were skilled at riding and using bolas to fell the wild cattle of the pampas, and who translated those talents into fighting for their chiefs. By the 1830s, after a series of mini-wars among the provincial caudillos of the interior, only three remained: Facundo Quiroga, Martín Güemes, and Estanislao López. Although a professed federalist, or an advocate of provincial rights and a weak central government, Juan Manuel de Rosas—the caudillo governor of Buenos Aires province since 1829—aspired to unite the country under

his leadership. As a result of deaths or military defeats of the three masters of the interior, Rosas accomplished his goal in 1838 and became dictator of the whole country.

Rosas was a large landowner who identified with his gaucho workers and followers, and exhibited the manly traits they respected. In order to bring both the city of Buenos Aires and the interior provinces to heel, he used armed gangs known as the *mazorca* (literally, “ear of corn,” but conveying the intimidating idea that the gang members were as close together as kernels on an ear of corn) to enforce his orders and instill fear. Everyone was required to wear the color red, at least a ribbon, or face the wrath of the *mazorca*. Rosas also developed a cult of personality that exalted him as the national leader and savior: His portrait was placed on the altars of all churches alongside that of Jesus Christ, implying a superhuman stature and powers. These methods served Rosas well until his defeat in battle in 1852 and subsequent exile to England, where he recreated a miniature version of his ranches.

Although forced to accept his rule, most of the elites of Buenos Aires detested Rosas and the denizens of the interior. Educated and urbane, these men, collectively known as the Generation of 1837, embraced progressive European economic and political ideas. One of them, Juan Bautista Alberdi, coined the phrase “*gobernar es poblar*” (to govern is to populate), reflecting their commitment to overwhelming the rustic gauchos with European immigrants—an approach adopted in other countries, usually unsuccessfully, in order to “whiten” the population of *castas*, Indians, and blacks who were seen as obstacles to progress.

Another member of the 1837 generation, Domingo F. Sarmiento, wrote about the interior and its inhabitants in a way that reflects both the urbanites’ disdain for their fellow countrymen and the deep division in Argentine society. Sarmiento published his book, *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants or, Civilization and*

“It is necessary to see their [the gauchos’] visages bristling with beards, their countenances as grave and serious as those of the Arabs of Asia, to appreciate the pitying scorn with which they look upon the sedentary denizen of the city, who may have read many books, but who cannot overthrow and slay a fierce bull, who could not provide himself with a horse from the pampas, who has never met a tiger alone, and received him with a dagger in one hand and a poncho rolled up in the other, to be thrust into the animal’s mouth, while he transfixes his heart with his dagger.” (p. 37) “Facundo is a type of primitive barbarism. His rage was that of a wild beast. The locks of his crisp black hair, which fell in meshes over his brow and eyes, resembled the snakes of Medusa’s head. Anger made his voice hoarse, and turned his glances into dragons. Wanting ability to manage the machinery of civil government, he substituted terror for patriotism and self-sacrifice.” (p. 80)

Source: Domingo F. Sarmiento, *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants or, Civilization and Barbarism* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), translator not listed.

Barbarism, in 1845, during his long exile in Chile. Although the Andes mountains stood between him and Rosas, Sarmiento dared not write about the dictator by name, instead using one of the earlier caudillos of the interior, Facundo Quiroga, as a stand-in. Despite its obvious elite, urban bias, Sarmiento's book may have left the best contemporary description of a caudillo in all of Latin America.

Mexico also had its share of caudillos in the half-century following independence, none as powerful or colorful as Antonio López de Santa Anna, known in the United States as the villain of the Alamo. He was so dominant that the period from 1833 to 1855 is often referred to as the "age of Santa Anna." Santa Anna was a creole officer in the Spanish army in Mexico who supported independence under the conservative Plan de Iguala. Always ambitious, he led the first two successful military coups in independent Mexico: the first in 1823 against Iturbide (the emperor he had helped install a few months earlier) and the second five years later to overturn the outcome of a presidential election. Santa Anna was first elected president in 1833 as a liberal, then switched to the conservatives and led a coup against his former allies the following year. He served as president a total of eleven times, usually abandoning the office after a short while to return to his hacienda in Vera Cruz. During Santa Anna's twenty-two years of dominating Mexican politics, the presidency changed hands thirty-six times and the average term was roughly 7.5 months.

Santa Anna effected a sophisticated style and developed a cult of personality underpinned by polished rhetoric. He styled himself after Napoleon Bonaparte, with the front-combed hairdo and lavish dress uniform. He issued grandiose manifestos on various occasions, both to his troops and to the nation. Upon switching from royalist to independence supporter, he proclaimed to his troops: "You are going to cover yourselves with glory. . . . We whom fate has placed between independence and death are fortunate indeed!" When he took the presidency a second time, in 1834, Santa Anna assured the public: "Power has never been the object of my ambition. . . . My repugnance to all influence direct or indirect in the affairs of state has demonstrated my lack of interest in power." Upon losing his left leg below the knee in the "Pastry War" of 1838, when a French force invaded to collect debts owed to French nationals, he declared: "On coming to the conclusion of my life. . . . I ask . . . that the government of my country inter my body in these sand dunes, so that all my companions in arms will know that this is the battle line that I leave marked for them."¹

Rather than dying on the beach, Santa Anna went on to further hone his cult of personality in the 1840s and 1850s. He bestowed upon himself grandiose titles, including "Benefactor of the Fatherland," "Napoleon of the West," and "His Most Serene Highness"—a title more appropriate to a monarchy than to a republic. He created a personal guard of 1,200 men, known as "Lancers of the Supreme Power." His birthday was celebrated as a national holiday; a twenty-one-gun salute preceded his departures from the presidential residence; his portrait graced public buildings throughout the country; and streets, plazas, and a new eight-thousand-seat theater in the capital bore his name. Statues of Santa Anna proliferated, and wags noted



Antonio López de Santa Anna

Source: Library of Congress

that a finger on one of the larger ones in the capital pointed directly at the national treasury. A crowning moment in the construction of his cult of personality came in 1842, when he held a funeral for the leg lost in the Pastry War. The leg, ensconced in a crystal urn inside a wooden box, was carried on a litter in an elaborate procession to its resting place in an imposing monument in the elite Santa Paula cemetery. Laudatory speeches sealed what must be one of the most bizarre exercises in cult-of-personality building in history. U.S. soldiers stole the wooden leg that replaced the severed one during the U.S.–Mexican War; it is displayed in the Illinois State Military Museum.

The ease with which Santa Anna abandoned and resumed the presidency at will was remarkable. One of his assets was an ability to quickly raise an army or augment the standing army, whether to seize the presidential palace or to fight a foreign or domestic enemy. This made him indispensable to conservative politicians and to the country. During his time, the Mexican army was a predatory body much more adroit at pillaging and overthrowing governments than defending the national borders. Between 1821 and 1845, the military budget exceeded government income

fourteen times, creating a sure recipe for regime change. Santa Anna led that army in the war of Texas secession (1835–1836), attaining infamy—at least from the U.S. standpoint—by his actions at the Alamo and his order to execute all prisoners following the battle of Goliad. He was captured and eventually released after signing treaties guaranteeing Texas independence. Yet when U.S. troops invaded in 1846, launching the U.S.–Mexican War, Santa Anna rose to the occasion and failed again in what was probably a doomed cause. Back in the presidency again after the onerous Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo took half of Mexico's territory, he sold the Gadsden Strip in today's southern Arizona and New Mexico to the United States for ten million dollars. His last presidency ended in 1855.

Santa Anna's only political principle was opportunism: He espoused no particular policy, and even if he had, the numerous interruptions of his and the other presidencies during the period of his ascendancy would have made effective policy implementation impossible. Mexico's difficult start toward development and stability cannot be blamed on Santa Anna, although he certainly did nothing to right the course: rather than the cause, Santa Anna was a symptom.

José Rafael Carrera was a caudillo of a different stripe from both Santa Anna and Rosas. A mestizo born in Guatemala City in 1814, he grew up in humble circumstances during Central America's transition from Spanish colony, to a province of Iturbide's Mexican Empire in 1821, to the United Provinces of Central America in 1823. After undergoing the common alternation between liberals and conservatives, Central America came under the domination of liberal Francisco Morazán in 1830. Morazán enacted the usual liberal policies, including attacking the church by abolishing the tithe, confiscating church land, suppressing the religious orders, and establishing freedom of religion. Morazán ended the special protected status that Indians held under Spain and pursued other policies that negatively impacted Guatemala's majority Maya Indian population. One of these was selling public lands to finance the government; as the boundaries between public and communal village lands were not well demarcated, considerable amounts of Indian land passed into private hands.

Offended by both the antichurch measures and policies that hurt Indians, Carrera—a heretofore little-known illiterate pig farmer—raised an improvised, poorly armed, mostly Indian army and attacked the Morazán government, driving it out of Guatemala in 1838—the same year that Central America devolved into five separate countries. Carrera became the dominant political figure in Guatemala, serving as president from 1844 to 1848. He returned to power in 1851, was proclaimed president for life three years later, and indeed served until his death in 1865.

Carrera ruled in the style of a caudillo, but without developing as much of a cult of personality as those created by Rosas and particularly by Santa Anna. He was a dictator who ignored the Constitution and the Congress and repressed the opposition, often by brutal means. His devout Catholicism and antiliberalism led him to intervene militarily in neighboring Central American republics to overthrow liberal regimes and fortify conservative ones.

Carrera consolidated his power by carrying out a difficult balancing act between Guatemala's creole elite and the country's lower classes of mestizos and Indians who were his original supporters. Without directly challenging the elites' privileges and economic interests, he placed the weight of his office on the side of those who put him there. He named numerous mestizos to high positions in the government and the army. Carrera assiduously protected Indian communal lands from monied interests who sought to expand the nascent coffee export business by acquiring those lands. He restored the paternalistic protection of the natives that liberals had removed by putting back into force the provisions regarding Indian protection written into colonial law. Artisans threatened by free trade also received Carrera's protection. The loyalty of Guatemala's common people was reflected in the terms they used to describe him, including "angel" and "son of God."

As a Catholic and a conservative, Carrera reversed liberal policies toward the church. He restored the tithes, invited the religious orders to return, and partially restored confiscated church lands. In 1852, he signed a treaty, or concordat, with the Vatican, making Guatemala—along with Costa Rica—the first country to negotiate a treaty of reconciliation between the new Spanish American republics and the Holy See. The concordat essentially restored the colonial royal patronage (*patronato real*), with the Guatemalan president replacing the Spanish king. In addition, Catholicism again became the state religion, censorship was reestablished, and all education had to conform to church doctrine. As Guatemala's archbishop administered the church in all of Central America, the deeply conservative values that Carrera embraced spread throughout the region. In exchange for Carrera's reestablishment of the colonial church, Pope Pius IX named him a "Great Cross Knight of the Order of St. Gregory."

THE EXCEPTIONS: CHILE, BRAZIL, AND PARAGUAY

Following the establishment of its first junta in 1810, Chile was as turbulent as any of the nascent Latin American republics. The country emerged from the independence wars under the dictatorship of the military hero Bernardo O'Higgins, who with the support of the independence army ruled as Supreme Director from 1818 to 1823. The son of a viceroy of Peru, O'Higgins implemented liberal policies and is considered the founder of the nation. Following his assassination in 1823, Chile experienced two military coups and alternated between centralist and federalist constitutions until 1830, when the country abruptly changed direction and political stability and continuity took root. From that point, Chile followed a different course from its neighbors and laid the basis for its future reputation as one of Latin America's most enduring democracies.

Many factors account for Chile's different trajectory. The country's geography was an important element in allowing the consolidation of stable government after 1830. Since the early 1880s, when it conquered the Araucanian Indians in the south

and annexed Bolivian and Peruvian territories in the north following the War of the Pacific, Chile has been a 2,650-mile ribbon wedged between the Andes and the Pacific Ocean. At the time of independence, it was a compact land some 700 miles in length, running from the mining area of the Norte Chico to the Bío-Bío River with few natural barriers to impede travel. Separated from Peru by a vast desert and from Bolivia and Argentina by the towering Andes, early Chile was spared the distraction of border disputes. The small population was concentrated in the fertile Central Valley, where large estates dominated. Despite experiments with federalist constitutions, and in contrast to many countries with difficult geographies that fostered regionalism, centrifugal forces were weak and Chile was well suited to a centralist political regime.

Some of the factors that fostered caudillo rule throughout Latin America were absent or attenuated in Chile. Since many of the troops who liberated the country were Argentine, Chile did not face the challenge of demobilizing a large independence army that proved so difficult in other countries. Slavery was a minor institution in Chile, and its abolition in 1823 removed a potentially exploitable and divisive political issue. Moreover, most unassimilated Indians were found beyond the de facto southern border at the Bío-Bío River. In contrast to Mexico, Peru, and other areas, the church in Chile was not particularly wealthy nor was it a major landowner; thus while liberals and conservatives disagreed on the status of the church, the issue was not as divisive as it was elsewhere and was susceptible to peaceful resolution. Finally, because of its remoteness and isolation during the colonial period, many of Chile's elites were blood relatives who could resolve political issues *en famille*.

While these conditions were favorable to Chile's overcoming early instability, human intervention was required to build workable institutions of government and foster economic development. A crucial turning point was reached in 1830: After liberals and conservatives had alternated in power for twenty years, the conservatives won a smashing victory in the battle of Lircay. Led by Joaquín Prieto, a conservative military force routed and dispersed the liberals and thus enabled conservatives to turn their principles into a stable and lasting political system. Elected president in 1831, Prieto named his mentor and friend Diego Portales, a wealthy merchant, as minister of the interior (which in Latin America involves law enforcement, not national parks). Portales used his office to suppress dissidents and cull those with liberal inclinations from the ranks of the military, but his lasting achievement was the 1833 constitution, which he inspired but did not write.

The 1833 constitution was the antithesis of democratic. It created a powerful presidency and a highly centralized administrative structure in which presidential appointees ruled the provinces. The very limited male suffrage based on property requirements effectively excluded the vast majority of Chileans from the political process. Moreover, the constitution placed the electoral machinery in the president's hands. It made Catholicism the official religion and prohibited the public exercise of any other faith. In other words, the 1833 constitution reestablished the colonial

form of government with the president replacing the captain general who had ruled Chile for Spain—a regime appropriately labeled by Chilean historians the “autocratic republic.”

In the view of President Prieto, this constitution was “a means of putting an end to the revolutions and disturbances which arose from the confusion in which the triumph of independence left us.”²² For Portales, the social order would be maintained by “the weight of the night.”²³ For the next three decades, elected presidents worked their will imposing order, liberally employing repression, and defeating two serious rebellions in the 1850s. The constitution proved sufficiently flexible so that, when liberalism resurfaced years later, the authoritarian character of government could be modified to accommodate gradual change, including the reduction of presidential power and increased party competition. After adopting seven constitutions between 1812 and 1828, Chile lived under the 1833 constitution until 1925.

As demonstrated by the plethora of constitutions adopted in most of the new countries, constitutions alone did not create viable political institutions. While the constitution provided the framework, other developments contributed to the consolidation of stability and continuity in government. Prieto reorganized government finances, and a major discovery of silver in 1832 at Chañarcillo in the north stimulated the economy. Responding to signs of stability, British merchants increased their presence, promoting trade and providing capital for development. Between 1837 and 1839, Chile fought a successful war against two neighbors temporarily united as the Peru–Bolivia Confederation, and as normally occurs, victory validated the current political regime.

Finally, the 1849 California Gold Rush brought major economic benefits to Chile. Many of the 49ers went to California via Cape Horn, and Chile became a critical source of supply for crews and passengers. In the next few years, before California agriculture developed sufficiently, Chile provided wheat flour, dried meat, and spirits to the burgeoning population of miners, in the process stimulating not only national agriculture but also shipping. Improved government finances; economic development in mining, agriculture, and shipping; and the salutary effects of a successful foreign war all worked to strengthen the Portalian system of government and gradually build what had been lost with Napoleon’s disruption of the Spanish monarchy: governmental legitimacy.

Independent Brazil faced many of the same challenges that plagued the Spanish American republics. Its heavy reliance on slavery raised the possibilities of disruptive slave rebellions and dissidents recruiting slaves for military purposes. Although the Portuguese had settled only a fraction of the territory comprising today’s Brazil, regionalism still flourished and stoked several rebellions. Brazilian authorities had to deal with a border dispute inherited from Spanish–Portuguese conflict along the east bank (Banda Oriental) of the Río de la Plata, where independent-minded gauchos rebelled against Rio de Janeiro. This conflict led to an inconclusive, three-year war between Brazil and Argentina (1825–1828). British mediation resulted in the creation of the republic of Uruguay on the east bank—and a buffer between the two large neighbors.

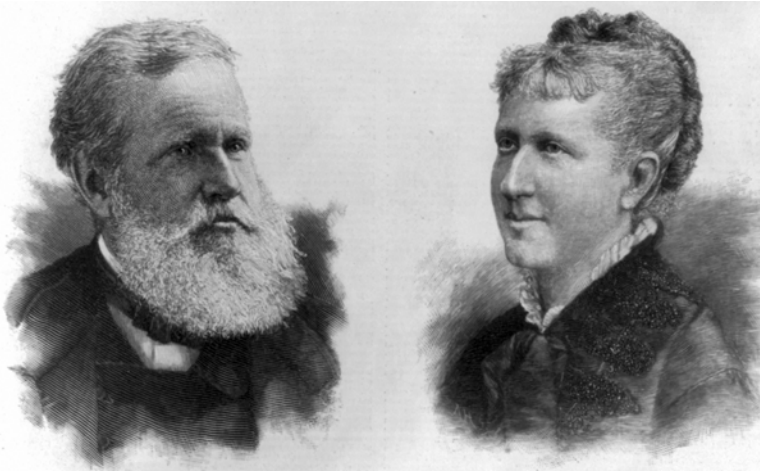
Along with these challenges, Brazil enjoyed important advantages that facilitated its transition from colony to independent country. Having fought no war for independence, the country was spared the widespread destruction and economic loss common to much of Spanish America and had neither troops to demobilize nor ambitious generals to lead rebellions. Brazilian liberals in general were less liberal than their Spanish American counterparts, a result of greater intellectual control by the mother country; therefore, their ideological differences with conservatives were less intense. The church in Brazil was not as wealthy and powerful as it was in major parts of Spain's empire, and thus a political issue that bedeviled some of the Spanish American republics was a minor matter in Brazil.

The greatest factor in Brazil's smooth transition was the uninterrupted legitimacy of royal authority. By leaving his son Pedro behind to lead a potential independence movement, King João wisely kept the Braganza dynasty in power and thus blunted the impact of the break with Portugal. With Pedro adroitly assuming the title of emperor, no juntas appeared to rule in the name of the distant king. Nonetheless, the inherited legitimacy of the Braganza crown had to be adapted to changing times.

While many of Spain's former colonies were ruled by caudillos, all (except Argentina before 1853) had constitutions, often several of them, that defined and theoretically limited presidential power. Pedro understood that royal absolutism would not be acceptable in Brazil and that he would need to establish a constitutional monarchy. Thus, he called a constituent assembly in 1823, within months of his declaration of independence, but its members were deeply divided over the shape of government. He dissolved the body and unilaterally gave Brazil a constitution by decree. This 1824 document embraced the colonial legacy of authoritarian government by giving the emperor extensive powers, including the right to appoint and remove ministers and to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies. It restricted the right to vote to male owners of substantial property. Yet, Brazilian opposition to the authoritarian Portuguese emperor simmered until he abdicated the throne in 1831, returned to Portugal, and left the crown to his five-year-old son, Pedro II.

At this point, the royal family's legitimate authority came into question. But the Brazilian elites, who benefited from the authoritarian system that protected their interests, coalesced around the young boy and formed a regency, a body to rule for the underage future king. The regency groomed the boy for his future responsibilities and, in concert with the parliament, responded to continuing regional revolts by enacting a constitutional amendment (the *Ato Adicional*) in 1834 that enhanced provincial powers. Pedro II was installed as emperor in 1840 at age fourteen, four years shy of the required age.

In contrast to the only other homegrown Latin American emperor, Iturbide of Mexico (1822–1823), Dom Pedro II proved to be the ideal monarch: intellectual, temperate, disciplined, dedicated, and very importantly, Brazilian by birth. Through his persona and his actions, he restored the somewhat frayed legitimate authority of the Braganza dynasty. He headed off serious political problems by the judicious use of his “moderating power,” assuring Brazil of viable national political institutions



Dom Pedro II and Princess Isabella of Brazil

Source: Library of Congress

that withstood all challenges and allowed the country to begin making notable economic advances by the 1850s. Although Dom Pedro opposed slavery and gradually emancipated all the slaves that he owned as emperor, he realized the centrality of slave labor to the national economy and stood by until abolition in 1888 made Brazil the last American country to end the institution. The following year, a military coup put an end to Dom Pedro II's benign rule and to the Brazilian empire itself.

Paraguay, in contrast to most of the new republics, began independent life with remarkable political stability: With brief intervals, only three men ruled the country from de facto independence in 1811 until 1870. The first of these was José Gaspar Rodríguez de Francia, generally known as Francia, who governed as a dictator from 1814 to his death in 1840. Francia was the son of a Brazilian military officer who became a tobacco planter in Paraguay and a woman of the Asunción elite. He earned a degree in theology at the University of Córdoba and returned to Asunción to teach at the local seminary. Although a theologian, he was also a student of the French Enlightenment who embraced advanced ideas that got him expelled from the seminary, after which he studied law.

Francia exhibited many traits of a caudillo, but his focus on policy and achievement of stability set him apart from other postindependence caudillos. His first political position was as an Asunción city councilman, followed by membership in the junta established to govern in King Ferdinand's absence. He rose to dominate the junta and authored the country's first constitution, adopted in 1813 by a congress of over a thousand delegates elected by universal male suffrage. As a result of his ambition, forceful personality, and prowess at political maneuvering, Congress elected Francia "supreme dictator" in 1814—hence his sobriquet "*El Supremo*"—and added "perpetual" to his title two years later before dissolving itself. Despite his immense

power, Francia lived modestly and left his unspent salary to the national treasury upon his death.

Francia pursued nationalist economic policies that were unique in Latin America. Going against the prevailing doctrine of free trade, he restricted international commerce and imposed virtual autarchy on landlocked Paraguay. He made the national government a major economic force: The state built and ran textile and shipbuilding industries and took ownership of around half the country's land by confiscating from the elites and the church and taking over unused land. The government operated numerous agricultural and cattle enterprises directly and leased land to peasants. Interestingly, although Paraguay had few African slaves, Francia did not abolish the institution.

Paraguay Today Fact Box





Area: 157,048 square miles

Population: 6,783,272

Population growth rate: 1.16%

Urban population: 59.7%

Ethnic composition: mestizo 95% and other 5%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 89.6%, Protestant 6.2%, and other Christian 1.1%

Life expectancy: 76.99 years

Literacy: 93.9%

Years of schooling (average): 12 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$8,700

Percentage of population living in poverty: 34.7%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 41.1% and lowest 1%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 1.66%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 29.0%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

Paraguay under Francia was a police state and *El Supremo* brooked no opposition. Francia appointed all civil and military officials and his secret police, called in the native Guaraní language *pyragües* (“hairy feet”), ruthlessly repressed dissenters and potential opponents. In 1820, the secret police allegedly uncovered a creole plot to assassinate Francia; in retribution, the dictator had some two hundred of Paraguay’s elite executed. The following year, he cracked down on the few hundred Spaniards in the country, accusing them of treason and imprisoning them until they paid a huge ransom that sapped their collective wealth and enriched the treasury. As a result of these leveling measures, both economic and political, the creole and Spanish elites were reduced in wealth and status and the mostly rural common people benefited.

El Supremo also targeted the Catholic Church. In 1815, Francia declared the church independent of Rome and appointed himself as its head. In addition to seizing church property, he closed Paraguay’s only seminary where he had earlier taught, took over church finances, banned religious orders, and abolished the *fuero eclesiástico*, or independent church court where churchmen were tried for civil as well as religious offenses. For these efforts, Pope Pius VII excommunicated him.

Francia was followed in office by a father and son succession of dictators, Carlos Antonio López (1841–1862) and Francisco Solano López (1862–1870). The latter was dictator when Paraguay went to war in 1864 with three neighbors—Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay—in what was known as the War of the Triple Alliance or simply the Paraguayan War. In retribution for a Brazilian invasion of Uruguay, Solano López closed the Paraguay River to Brazilian traffic and invaded Brazil’s Mato Grosso region, crossing Argentine territory without permission in the process. In response, the three countries declared war in 1865. Despite being vastly outmanned and outgunned, Paraguayan troops defended most of the country until 1868. Asunción fell the following year, and Solano López was killed by Brazilian cavalry in March 1870, effectively ending the war. Paraguay paid a huge price for its dictator’s folly: Up to one third of its population, 38 percent of its territory, and the industry that Francia had built were lost.

The war’s aftermath revealed that, in contrast to Brazil and Chile, the authoritarian stability that Francia had created was based on personalism rather than on institutions: After having only three rulers from independence to 1870, instability set in and Paraguay had thirty-two presidents between the war’s end and 1932. Authoritarian stability returned in the brutal thirty-five-year dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner (1954–1989).

THE COLONIAL LEGACIES AS POLITICAL ISSUES, 1820s–1870s

In addition to competition for office, via ballots or bullets, postindependence politics involved struggles between advocates of military and civilian rule and between liberals and conservatives over the shape and role of government and a range of other

issues. Among these issues were most of the colonial legacies. As we have seen, the colonial legacy of authoritarian governance flourished. Caudillos certainly embraced and ruled by authoritarian means, and the three exceptional countries—Chile, Brazil, and Paraguay—constructed governments based on the principle and practice of authoritarianism. While liberals generally opposed authoritarianism, they made little headway against it during this period.

The economic dependency that Spain and Portugal had imposed on mercantilist principles, and which the colonials resented and resisted, appeared to have been resolved with the advent of free trade that accompanied independence. But lacking capital and technology for development, the independent countries settled into a pattern of economic dominance by Britain—the world's leading manufacturing, trading, and investing country throughout the nineteenth century. Latin America's economic dependency would deepen later in the nineteenth century, but would not become an important political issue until the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The colonial legacy of the large landed estate was strengthened through the political process following independence. Many of the elites in Spanish America and Brazil were anchored in ownership of large rural estates, and they saw no reason to question the institution's existence. Rather, in several countries, they expanded their control over the countryside in the aftermath of independence. The new rulers faced empty government treasuries and, in many countries, armies that clamored for large budgets, under threat of overthrowing the administration that did not deliver them. Governments also needed revenue to service loans and pay bureaucrats, and they turned to the land to secure it. Liberal doctrine underpinned the expropriation of both church and Indian communal lands. The view of the widely read and admired Adam Smith, author of *The Wealth of Nations* (1776), was that collective, as opposed to individual, landownership impeded economic development and should be abolished. Thus, several of the new governments confiscated church land and sold it to raise money for their treasuries. The church, particularly the religious orders, suffered huge losses. In a few countries, conservative governments later restored some church property or offered restitution; however, regardless of their politics, the new owners of former church land usually opposed restoration in order to keep their newly acquired property. Most communally owned Indian land survived during the postindependence period, owing to the natives' resistance and the low value of their property; the late nineteenth century would be much more difficult for Indian landowners.

Governments also sold off much of the public domain they inherited from the Spanish crown, and wealthy creoles bought most of these lands. The result of this policy combined with the sale of church land was a massive growth of the large landed estate in several areas. In Argentina by 1830, some five hundred individuals had acquired twenty-one million acres, while in Mexico, a single extended family owned sixteen million acres by mid-century.

The political process also modified the colonial legacy of a rigid social hierarchy following independence. At the top of the social hierarchy, the Spaniards and Portuguese either left America, lost their commanding positions in government and

church, or at the least forfeited the status they enjoyed as a result of their European birth. Consequently, the creoles assumed the top position in the social pyramid.

At the bottom of the social hierarchy, the status of some African slaves and Indians underwent change, while that of *castas* and of women of all social ranks remained relatively constant. African slavery was practiced throughout colonial Latin America, although with great variation as to the numbers of slaves and their importance to regional economies. Leaders of the new republics set their sights first on the slave trade from Africa. The British had taken the lead in pressing internationally for the abolition of the trade; the United States ended the legal importation of slaves in 1808 and most of Spanish America followed suit during the 1810s and 1820s, although Brazil resisted British pressure until 1850 and Spanish Cuba until 1867. Slavery also came under scrutiny; slaves who fought in the independence wars were often granted freedom, and following independence, most of the new republics took steps to end the institution itself. The importance of African slavery to each country determined the length of the abolition process.

Haitian slaves gained *de facto* freedom during the independence war and formal abolition shortly thereafter. The Dominican Republic followed in 1822. The next year, Chile—where slavery was not deemed essential to the national economy—became the first continental republic to abolish the institution unconditionally. The United Provinces of Central America, which also had small slave populations, terminated slavery with compensation for owners in 1824. Mexico followed in 1829.



Slave ship in a Brazilian port, early post-independence period

Source: Library of Congress, from Johann Moritz Rugendas, *Voyage Pittoresque dans le Bresil*, traduit de l'Allemand (Paris, 1835)

The countries of Spanish South America where slavery was an important component of the labor force followed a different pattern: They took liberal stances on slavery while buying time to adjust to its extinction. In 1821, Gran Colombia freed all children of slave mothers born after July of that year by a “law of the free womb,” but established lengthy “apprenticeships” that kept them in what amounted to continued slavery for up to twenty years or longer. The countries created from the breakup of Gran Colombia—Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela—abolished the institution definitively in 1851, 1852, and 1854, respectively, after the number of enslaved had fallen by up to a third from pre-independence levels. Owners were promised but did not always receive compensation. Uruguay abolished the institution in 1842 and Argentina in 1853. The liberator of Peru, the Argentine general San Martín, began the process there in 1821 by dictating a law of the free womb, but apprenticeships kept the children of slave mothers in lengthy bondage. Final abolition in Peru, with compensation, came in 1854.

Although slavery had little importance to the economies of Bolivia and Paraguay, it survived there until 1861 and 1869, respectively. Thereafter, slavery continued only in Spanish Cuba and Puerto Rico and in Brazil. From around a quarter million slaves in continental Spanish America on the eve of independence, few remained after 1854 and none fifteen years later.

What did freedom mean for slaves? It did not change the position of blacks in the social hierarchy, as they continued to dwell with Indians at the bottom. Material conditions may have deteriorated for many, as they could no longer rely on the subsistence, however meager, provided by their former owners; and there was no “forty acre and a mule” policy that benefited some freed slaves in the U.S. South following the Civil War. Many former slaves remained in the same positions they had occupied prior to abolition, drawing minimal salaries or trapped by debt. Yet, not having families sundered by the sale of children and spouses and no longer being subject to the lash at the master’s whim were substantive changes. The intangible, the meaning and value of freedom, of no longer being property and having some control over one’s life must have been a great, meaningful benefit.

For Indians, independence brought both benefits and liabilities. They lost the special protected status—based in Spanish colonial law—that in theory sheltered them from abuse at the hands of officials and non-Indians and protected their lands from avaricious creoles and Spaniards. In a gesture of the liberal idealism that accompanied independence, Indians in some new republics were declared citizens on an equal footing with their fellow countrymen. The term “Indian” was officially abolished in a few countries, to be replaced by “citizen,” “American,” or “Peruvian.” The equal footing was a chimera, however, as most Indians were illiterate, spoke no Spanish, and thus could not defend themselves or their land against aggressive creoles or corrupt officials. On the positive side, forced labor, which had been ended late in the colonial period, was not revived and the tribute, or head tax on Indians, was eliminated. The tribute was more than a tax burden to Indians; it required them to obtain remunerative work in order to pay the tax. This normally took them away

from their villages and disrupted their life of subsistence farming, herding, and close communal ties. In Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, the tribute was such an important part of government revenue that it was reinstated until final abolition in 1854, 1857, and 1874, respectively, although Bolivian regional authorities continued to collect the tax into the 1930s in some cases.

While the political process determined the condition of slaves and Indians, the status of women did not enter the realm of politics. The colonial patriarchal subordination of women continued; as in Europe and the United States, women were not entitled to full legal rights, to vote, or to hold public office. Very few educational opportunities were open to women. The changes that affected women resulted primarily from their social standing: Spanish and Portuguese women lost status, while creole and *mazombo* women gained; African slave women gained freedom and Indian women benefited from the abolition of tribute. Beyond those changes, women's lives differed little from what they had been in the colonial period.

The colonial legacy of the powerful and monopolistic Roman Catholic Church was the most divisive political issue of the half-century following independence. At the focal point of the pervasive liberal-conservative struggle, the church issue was at the forefront of political conflict in several countries. To conservatives, the church was the bulwark of the inherited colonial social order. It was a means of controlling the masses, as the Iberians had recognized early on, and thus a means of preserving the elites' privileges. The church's control of education meant the indoctrination of future generations of leaders in conservative values. But the church's role in politics went beyond those specific issues. Following the French Revolution of 1789, during which the Catholic Church was disestablished and persecuted, the church at its highest levels in the Vatican became very conservative and viewed liberalism as an existential threat.

The most extreme statement of antiliberalism was the *Syllabus of Errors*, published in 1864 by Pope Pius IX, whose long reign stretched from 1846 to 1878. In this document, the Pope condemned a list of eighty liberal propositions. Two of these "errors" were particularly relevant to Latin America. Pius unequivocally rejected the liberal view that "it is no longer expedient that the Catholic religion should be held as the only religion of the state." In a sweeping denunciation of liberalism and secularism, he condemned the proposition that "the Roman Pontiff can, and ought to, reconcile himself, and come to terms with progress, liberalism and modern civilization."⁴ Latin American churchmen by and large embraced the Pope's reactionary stance on these propositions. Thus to liberals, most of whom were also practicing Catholics, the institutional church was an impediment to the change they embraced and equated with progress. Therefore, they sought to weaken church power in a number of ways, including reducing its wealth and political influence and establishing public education to introduce competing ideas into the national polity. Some also favored allowing different religions, primarily Protestantism at that time, to become legal and break the traditional Catholic monopoly of religion.

Despite their deeply held differences, conservatives and liberals agreed on one basic point. At issue from the moment of independence was whether the new states inherited the Iberian monarchies' patronage over the church (the *patronato real* and, in Portugal, the *padroado real*). Each country claimed the powers formerly exercised by the Iberian kings of appointing ranking church officials, authorizing church and other religious buildings and property, and collecting the tithe (Chapter 1). The Vatican denied the claims of inheritance, insisting that all the rights granted to Spain and Portugal were extinguished when the former colonies became independent. This issue was resolved more easily in Brazil than elsewhere, owing to the dynastic continuity under the Portuguese royal family. In most cases, long-term accommodation was reached by allowing national governments to nominate prelates for bishop, archbishop, and other high positions—whom the Pope normally confirmed.

Conservatives and liberals were divided over all other church-related issues, and the outcomes of their struggle over the church varied by time and by country. It was common for church policy to change radically as power shifted between the two camps. We have seen the church policies of Paraguay's dictator Francia, which resulted in his excommunication, and of Guatemalan caudillo Carrera, for which the Pope awarded him a knighthood. While conflict over the church was often violent, in several countries, church–state issues were resolved without major conflict. Argentine leaders offered the most pragmatic solution of all: In their 1853 constitution, which continues in force today, though much amended, they established Catholicism as the official, state-supported religion while allowing public worship of all others.

Peaceful resolution of the church issue eluded other countries, including Mexico, which experienced the most divisive and bloody conflict over the church of any new country. In 1833, a liberal government enacted laws that claimed the patronage, established public education, banned priests from using the pulpit for political purposes, and declared the tithe voluntary. The conservative reaction was so powerful that Santa Anna, detecting the shifting winds, switched from liberal to conservative and led the coup to annul the offending laws. In 1855, liberals finally succeeded in ridding Mexico of Santa Anna. Having suffered decades of frustration under the caudillo, they made the most of their control of government. Under the leadership of talented men, among them Benito Juárez, a Zapotec Indian from the southern state of Oaxaca, they launched a series of laws known as *La Reforma* and, in 1857, adopted a new constitution.

In common with liberals in other countries, Juárez and the Mexican liberals directed their wrath at the Catholic Church for being the bulwark of the order they sought to change. The new constitution included a sweeping attack on church power and property; by not explicitly making Catholicism the official religion, it tacitly established religious freedom. It abolished the *fueros*, or special church as well as military courts that protected their members from civil jurisdiction; required the church to sell its land; and regulated fees that priests could charge for administering the sacraments. Indirect blows at the church included freedom of speech and press and secular public education.

Even as the draft constitution was debated in Congress, Pope Pius IX denounced it in the harshest terms: "For the purpose of more easily corrupting manners and propagating the detestable pest of indifferntism and tearing souls away from our Most Holy Religion, it allows the free exercise of all cults and admits the right of pronouncing in public every kind of thought and opinion."⁵ He declared the constitution-in-progress "null and void" even before its enactment. Despite the papal interdiction, the constitution was promulgated in 1857. Mexican government employees then faced a dilemma: They were required to swear allegiance to the document, but in doing so became subject to excommunication.

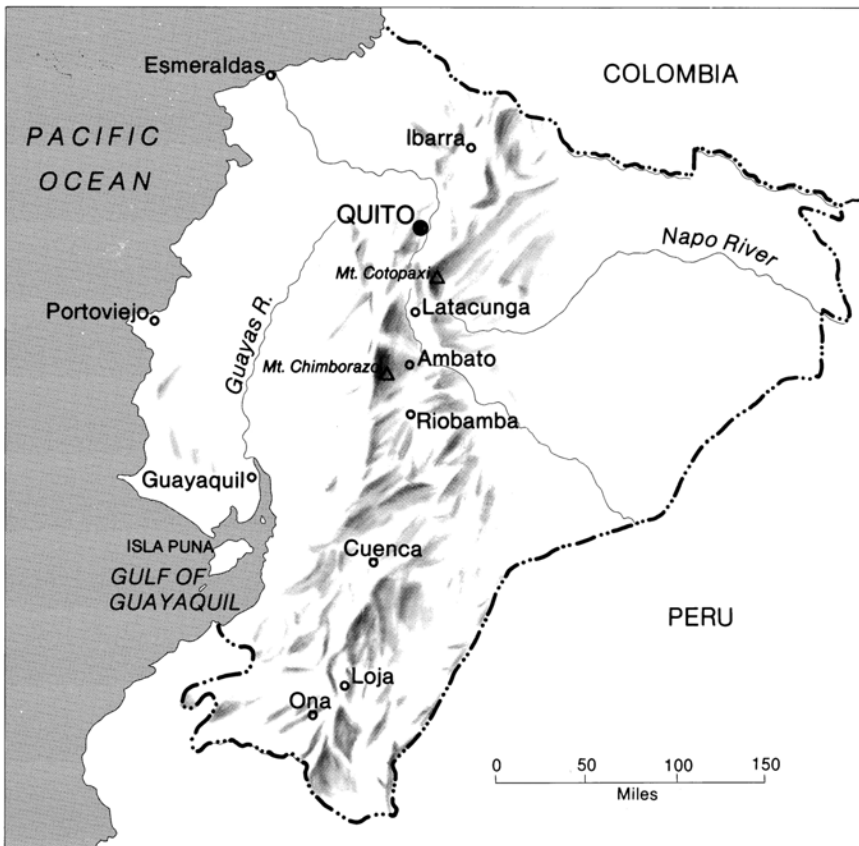
In response to the constitution, conservatives launched their standard cry of "*religión y fueros*" along with the predictable uprising, led by General Félix María Zuloaga, which drove the liberal government out of the capital. Zuloaga repealed the constitution and the anticlerical laws, launching a bloody civil war. From his provisional capital in Veracruz, Juárez responded in 1859 with the "Reform Laws," which went further than the constitution by confiscating all church land, suppressing the religious orders, establishing civil marriage and cemeteries, formally separating church and state, and explicitly declaring freedom of religion. After three years of terrible loss of life and destruction of property, the liberals won the war and Juárez returned to Mexico City, but the church issue was not yet settled.

Desperate to restore church power, Mexico's conservatives conspired with Napoleon III, French emperor since 1852, to further their cause through his imperial ambitions. The timing was propitious, as the United States was engaged in its Civil War and unable to enforce the Monroe Doctrine, which ostensibly barred European colonization in the Western Hemisphere (Chapter 6). Using the pretext of Juárez's suspension of payments on foreign financial claims against Mexico, Napoleon dispatched troops in 1862 to drive the liberal government out so that the unemployed Archduke Maximilian of Hapsburg could be installed as Mexico's monarch and his puppet. To formalize the gambit, a conservative "Assembly of Notables" visited Maximilian at his castle in Trieste, Italy, to offer him the crown. Maximilian insisted that a plebiscite be held to legitimize his future rule, and a rigged vote approved it. He arrived in the Mexican capital with his wife Carlota in 1864.

The conservatives' extreme strategy to resurrect the colonial legacy of a powerful and monopolistic Catholic Church failed, because Maximilian refused to do their bidding. Unbeknownst to them, Maximilian was a freemason, a member of the secret anti-Catholic society founded in England in the early 1700s. Moreover, with its Civil War over, the United States threatened military intervention under the terms of the Monroe Doctrine. Napoleon began withdrawing troops in 1866; when the last French troops departed, Maximilian was left in an untenable position. Juárez had been forced to move around the country since 1862, continuing to claim the presidency, and the French troops' exit tilted the balance toward the liberals. They captured Maximilian and executed him on the Hill of the Bells in Querétaro in June 1867. This appeared to end the struggle over the church in Mexico, but it was just the end of another act in the drama.

At the opposite extreme of the Mexican liberals' attack on the church was the policy of Ecuadorian president Gabriel García Moreno to restore church power after liberals had undermined it. President from 1861 to 1865 and again from 1869 to 1875, García Moreno had a theocratic vision for his country that was spelled out in the 1862 treaty, or concordat, that he signed with the Vatican. By the terms of the concordat, the Catholic Church's monopoly of religion was restored, freemasonry banned, and the church's right to hold existing and acquire new property confirmed. The state was prohibited from suppressing religious orders or rejecting new ones that might want to establish themselves in Ecuador, and the religious *fuero* was reestablished. All education through the university level had to conform to Catholic doctrine, and bishops were empowered to select university texts for certain subjects and to ban offending books—one of the extinct Inquisition's major functions. In exchange for these privileges, the Pope formalized the state's appointment power over high church offices.

Ecuador Today Fact Box





Area: 109,484 square miles

Population: 15,868,396

Population growth rate: 1.35%

Urban population: 63.7%

Ethnic composition: mestizo 71.9%, *mantubio* (coastal peasants) 7.4%, Amerindian 7%, white 6.1%, Afroecuadorian 4.3%, mulatto 1.9%, and black 1%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 74%, evangelical 10.4%, other 6.4%, and atheist 7.9%

Life expectancy: 76.56 years

Literacy: 94.5%

Years of schooling (average): 14 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$11,300

Percentage of population living in poverty: 25.6%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 35.4% and lowest 1.4%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 2.83%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 37.6%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

During his second presidential term, García Moreno enacted a new constitution, called by its detractors the “Charter of Slavery to the Vatican,” that restated some of the concordat provisions. In addition, it limited the franchise to males who were twenty-one years of age, literate, and Catholic, and turned over elementary education to members of religious orders. In 1873, the president dedicated his country to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Yet all of García Moreno’s work to restore the colonial legacy would be undone by President Eloy Alfaro Delgado between 1895 and 1911.

By the end of the most heated period of contestation over the status of the Catholic Church, the number of clergy serving Latin America had diminished significantly. Liberal administrations sometimes closed seminaries as well as monasteries and convents, as did Francia in Paraguay, making it difficult to train priests. They also prohibited foreign priests at times. Confiscation of church lands and other assets sapped church wealth and affected the material rewards that, to some, had been part of the attraction of an ecclesiastical career during the colonial period. As earlier, many priests preferred urban parishes, and before the turn of the twentieth century, Catholics in some rural areas rarely saw a priest. Thus not only its changing legal status but also the considerable thinning of its ranks tended to reduce the power and influence of the Catholic Church during the age of caudillos and beyond.

The age of caudillos was, in many ways, a lost half-century. With a few exceptions, the new countries were unable to attain stable and effective governance and foster economic development. The deep divide between conservatives and liberals over the colonial legacies, especially the Catholic Church, was a primary cause of this lack of progress. The caudillos who rose to fill the vacuum of power did not cause the failures of the period; rather, they were symptoms of the challenges of the transition from colony to independent country.

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2. Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 110.
3. Simon Collier, *Chile: The Making of a Republic, 1830–1865: Politics and Ideas* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 130.
4. www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius09/p9syll.htm.
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Reflections on the Colonial Legacies, 1790s–1870s

Most of Latin America achieved independence along with the United States during the first wave of decolonization, separated by a century and a half from the second wave involving Asia, Africa, and parts of the Caribbean and Oceania. Latin America retained many legacies of its long period of colonial rule. At the ends of Parts II–VI of the book, we review the outcomes of political contestation over the colonial legacies during the period covered in each part, looking for change and continuity over time. This is the first of these “Reflections.”

Authoritarian governance continued across the independence divide under new leaders. In contrast to the constancy of imperial rule, authoritarian governance in the age of caudillos, with a few exceptions, was unstable and often violent. But beneath the political surface, whether turbulent or stable, an important development was occurring—one that would have consequences for the future. The Latin American countries without exception embraced the new trends of constitutionalism and separation of powers that were taking root in the United States and, in more limited fashion, in Europe. While caudillos trampled or ignored constitutions, national and provincial legislatures, and the courts, Latin Americans became accustomed to the concept, if not the practice, of living under constitutions and three distinct branches of government. Thus, the seeds for a future of more orderly and eventually even democratic government were planted during these early years.

The legacy of a rigid social hierarchy also continued through the break with Portugal and Spain, but with important changes. The top stratum of society, the Spanish and Portuguese, was removed; those who remained in the former colonies blended with the creole and *mazombo* elites. At the lowest level of society, the abolition of African slavery in most of the region by 1854 was a major change, as was the abolition of Indian tribute. Despite these substantive gains, Indians and African-descended people remained firmly anchored at the bottom of the social pyramid, and the

position of *castas* in general did not change. Where men of lower class background rose to prominence—the Indian Benito Juárez, the mestizo José Rafael Carrera, or others such as the Brazilian man of letters Luiz Gama and engineer Andre Rebouças, both mulattos—they did so as individuals, not as part of a generalized social shift. Women of all social ranks experienced little change in their status and opportunities during this period.

Economic dependency was altered but not ended with independence. Enforcement of controls over colonial production and trade had weakened over time and had broken down under the impact of the Napoleonic wars. The establishment of free trade with independence was the realization of a long-standing aspiration that the new countries' leaders sanctioned in law, but it did little to mitigate economic dependency as Latin America became subject to British economic dominance.

The legacy of the large landed estate continued into the early postindependence years. In those countries where governments confiscated and sold church and public lands, the large estate's dominance over the rural economy and society was reinforced.

Of the five colonial legacies upon which we focus, the powerful Roman Catholic Church experienced the greatest change during the age of caudillos because it became the focal point of the intense, sometimes violent liberal–conservative struggle. Conservatives backed by the papacy, particularly Pope Pius IX, fought to preserve the church's status quo as the bulwark of the colonial social order, while liberals strove to strip the church of its power, wealth, and monopoly because it stood in the way of the progressive changes they sought. The church's land and other assets were also easy targets for cash-strapped governments that had few other sources of revenue. By the 1870s, the Catholic Church in many countries had lost much of its wealth, its monopoly over education, and its status as the sole legal religion. As a result, it had also lost much of its political power but, with almost all Latin Americans professing Catholicism, it remained very influential.

III

EXPORTS, OLIGARCHIES,
AND YANKEES, 1870s–1930

4

The Export Economies

Latin America underwent a profound physical transformation between 1850 and 1900. In 1850, the colonial period lingered on almost everywhere. The pace of life was slow in both urban and rural areas. Goods were still transported by pack mules, oxcarts, or on the backs of Indians and African slaves, and the small volume of exports was loaded onto sailing ships in primitive ports. Cities, even the capitals, were still small. The elites lived close by the main square, where the cathedral or principal church and government offices were located, in colonial-era single-story adobe houses with tile roofs and interior patios.

Half a century later, the cities had grown and the larger ones featured horse-drawn or electric streetcars, paved streets, and gas or electric lighting. In the larger countries, factories belched smoke in the rising industrial districts on the outskirts. Elite houses in the colonial center had been divided up into tiny dwellings or demolished and replaced with tenements to accommodate the growing ranks of rural-to-urban migrants. Enriched by the export economies and increasingly influenced by Europe through modern communications and travel, the wealthy built their new mansions on the edge of the colonial city. Admirers of France and England, they built in Second Empire, Georgian, and other European styles. Reflecting their wealth and political power, elite men in most national and some provincial capitals built exclusive clubs for themselves—called the Club de la Unión in several places—where they consumed luxury foods and French wines and cognacs while making their financial and political deals.

By 1900, modernization had penetrated the countryside in select regions. Railroads had reached into the hinterlands, replacing animal traction in the conveyance of foodstuffs to the cities and wheat, cattle, coffee, sugar, and other commodities to

ports that had been redone to accommodate large steamships. Mechanized agriculture had appeared in some areas, and refurbished or newly opened mines featured steam-driven machinery and giant ore crushers. Telegraph lines carried news instantly in the modernized parts of the country. Electricity and telephones occasionally reached beyond the cities.

Latin America's transformation was more than physical: it was economic, social, political, cultural, and in several areas, ethnic. It was also incomplete: Some regions were little changed during this half-century, while in others there were few reminders by 1900, and certainly by 1930, of the lingering colonial period that was so evident in 1850. Latin America's integration into the new world economy drove this great transformation.

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY AND LATIN AMERICA

A global economy began to emerge in the second third of the nineteenth century. By the 1880s, globalization had impacted many of the world's countries and Europe's colonies, and the pace of the world market's expansion continued to accelerate until it was set back by World War I. After a few years of recovery, the Great Depression that began on Wall Street in October 1929 destroyed the economic ties that bound the world together and ended the first global economy (we now live in the second global economy).

The world economy grew out of the Industrial Revolution, which started in the late 1700s and centered in Great Britain. The Industrial Revolution drew on a revolution in technology. Steam power was harnessed to manufacturing and transportation, particularly railroads and oceangoing ships. Electricity, new mining techniques, and innovations in agricultural production were some of the other technologies that became common in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and underpinned the new world economy.

By the last third of the nineteenth century, industrialization had advanced to the point that Britain, France, Germany, and a few other European countries had accumulated capital to export and required large and growing quantities of raw materials that they could not acquire domestically; the United States was not far behind. The industrial countries also needed markets abroad for their manufactured products. These dynamics drew the independent countries of Latin America and Europe's Asian, African, Caribbean, and Pacific colonies into a close economic relationship with the industrial countries based on the exchange of raw materials for manufactured goods. Growing demand for raw materials and the desire for captive markets led to the last major act in European imperial expansion: the partitioning of sub-Saharan Africa among several European powers in the 1880s.

Latin America had great potential for participation in the global economy: abundant mineral resources, plenty of land suited to agricultural production, and in most

places, available labor. From the time of independence, Britain had made arrangements with the fledgling countries for free trade; thus the manufactures sent to Latin America in exchange for raw materials paid low tariffs, creating the institutional framework needed for the emergence of the global economy. What Latin America lacked, in order to respond to the new world market demands, was capital, technology, and in some areas, labor.

To tap Latin America's resources, the industrializing European countries and the United States invested their capital in railroads, mines, land, processing plants, ports, steamship lines, and other facilities designed to extract raw materials or grow foodstuffs and transport them to market. They also invested in government bonds, which were not as risky by the 1880s as they had been at the time of independence; in banks; and in utilities such as power plants, urban lighting, and street car companies. Most capital came initially from Great Britain. The leader in the Industrial Revolution, Britain had capital to invest around the globe: Its investment in Latin America grew nearly tenfold between 1870 and 1914, to some \$3.6 billion, accounting for around half of total foreign investment in the region. Meanwhile, the United States became the dominant foreign investor in the Caribbean Basin by the turn of the twentieth century, having placed around a billion dollars in Mexico and hundreds of millions in the Caribbean islands and Central America.

Latin America's participation in the world economy would not have been possible without a revolution in transportation, beginning with railroads. Steam locomotives were hauling freight in England by 1825, and rail quickly spread to the European continent, the United States, and beyond. Latin America's first short railroad opened in Cuba in 1837 to haul sugar from plantations to ports. From there, rail lines spread to the continent, and by 1930 Latin America boasted some 79,000 miles of track (by comparison, the much smaller Britain had 33,000 and the United States 431,000 miles of track). By the 1910s, nearly a third of all direct foreign investment was in railroads. Rail allowed for the profitable shipment of bulky, low value goods such as wheat and unrefined ore; it cut shipping costs dramatically, particularly in the extreme topography of the Andes and parts of Mexico and Central America.

The railroads were built primarily to facilitate exports; they connected at the ports with the other half of the transportation revolution, the steamship. The first steamships were built early in the nineteenth century, and they were regularly crossing the Atlantic by the 1830s. Steamships began serving Latin American ports by the 1840s, significantly cutting sailing times to and from Europe and the United States. As shipyards increased the size of the steamships they produced, over time the cargo capacity of steamships dwarfed that of sailing ships and the cost of shipping dropped sharply.

A partial list of other new technologies that underpinned Latin America's entry into the world market includes the cyanide process for refining silver and gold; modern smelters; steam-powered sugar mills, dredges, mine pumps, and other



Railroad in Minas Gerais state, Brazil, 1880s

Source: Library of Congress

machinery; cranes for loading and unloading at ports; electricity; the telegraph; the telephone; and agricultural machinery such as the mechanical wheat binder, the steel plow, and barbed wire. A submarine cable that linked Brazil with Europe in 1874 sped communication exponentially.

With capital and technology flowing in and labor available in most areas, Latin America was producing exports on an unprecedented scale by the 1880s. Most export products fit into one of three categories: minerals, food staples, and luxury foods. Among mineral exports were silver, which rebounded from its postindependence decline; gold; nitrates for fertilizer and gunpowder; copper for the nascent electric industry; tin; petroleum; and a host of other minerals with specialized uses. Among the food staples destined for a hungry Europe were wheat, barley, and other grains along with beef and lamb, and bananas—a newly introduced food which rapidly became a favorite in both the United States and Europe. Luxury foods included products that were not essential to life but which, with the rise of disposable income among the middle and working classes in the industrializing countries, became items of mass consumption: coffee, sugar, cacao (to be refined into chocolate), and finer cuts of meat. Outside these three primary categories of exports were rubber from the Amazon Basin, wool, cotton, quinine (for use against malaria), henequen from Mexico's Yucatán peninsula (which supplied the demand

for agricultural binding twine), and other regionally important commodities. It is worth noting that of the main agricultural and animal-based exports—sugar, bananas, coffee, cacao, wheat, beef, lamb, wool, and cotton—only cacao is native to the Americas.

Today, we readily identify the countries where our raw material imports from Latin America originate. This association of product with country dates to the era of the export economies: While there have been some changes over time, such as wines from Chile and Argentina; soy from Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Bolivia; cocaine from several Andean countries; fresh-cut flowers from Colombia; and others, raw material export patterns set in the nineteenth century have continued into the twenty-first. The Central American countries and Colombia supplied and continue to supply coffee from their highlands and bananas from their tropical Caribbean lowlands. Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico have relied most heavily on sugar, and secondarily on tobacco. Bolivia supplied silver until around 1900, then became the world's major exporter of tin. Chile exported minerals: nitrates until the 1920s, then predominantly copper. Argentina and Uruguay specialized in food staples, including wheat and other grains, meat, and wool. Brazil's major export was coffee, with rubber in second place until that commodity collapsed around 1913. Venezuela and Ecuador defied the pattern of continuity in raw material exports: Petroleum surpassed Venezuela's traditional leaders of coffee and cacao in the 1920s and Ecuador's heavy reliance on cacao gave way to growth in banana production, and eventually to oil. Peru and Mexico were fortunate to develop a wide variety of mineral and agricultural commodities for export.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS OF THE EXPORT SECTORS

Of all the Latin American countries, Argentina experienced the most profound transformation during the era of the export economies. A major reason for this far-reaching change was the geographic breadth of the area affected by integration into the world market. In many countries, relatively small export enclaves developed around mines or agricultural areas where certain export crops such as cacao, bananas, or henequen could be profitably grown. In Argentina, by contrast, the primary export commodities—grains and animal products—were produced throughout much of the country and then passed through processing plants in Buenos Aires and port cities along the Paraná River. This pattern spread the economic impact widely. The other important factor driving Argentina's transformation was immigration: Lacking sufficient domestic population to produce and process the exports, Argentina turned to Europe to supplement its labor force, undergoing a profound demographic change in the process.

The success of Argentine exports resulted primarily from Europe's inability to feed itself after mid-nineteenth century because of urbanization and soil exhaustion (hence the demand for fertilizers, including Peruvian guano and later, Chilean nitrates). Thus, wheat and meat were in constant demand. Secondly, Argentina supplied wool for the booming textile factories in Birmingham and Manchester, England, and elsewhere. But until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Argentina lacked the capital, technology, and labor needed to develop exports.

At the dawn of Argentina's transformation, a substantial part of the country's territory, mostly south of the Río Colorado in northern Patagonia, was still in the possession of Indians. Driving the Indians off of lands capable of producing for export became a national priority. The "conquest of the desert," facilitated by the new technology of the repeating rifle, took place in 1879–1880 under the direction of future president General Julio Roca. The brutal expulsion of the natives brought into the national orbit some 225,000 square miles of land more arid than the *pampa húmeda* (wet plain) inland from Buenos Aires but, with the benefit of irrigation, very productive for cattle raising and agriculture. As had occurred earlier, the newly conquered lands were acquired in large units by the wealthy and influential—many of them already owners of large estates known in Argentina as *estancias*.

The development of the Argentine export economy began with cattle. The Argentine plains were rich in wild cattle descended from stock introduced by early Spanish settlers and gone feral, grazing on the native grasses of the pampas. The gauchos so despised by the progressive elements of Buenos Aires lived by harvesting these "creole" cattle, often eating only the delicacies and leaving carcasses to rot. A colonial industry had developed to produce beef preserved by salting; most of this was exported for consumption by slaves in Brazil and eventually, Cuba. This *saladero* business continued well past independence, but its tough and tasteless product was not suitable to European palates.

The transformation of the cattle economy began in earnest in the 1870s. The first imperative was improving the meat. This required the importation of breeding stock of beef cattle, mostly Shorthorns and Herefords from England, to mix with the creole cattle and recast the genetic pool. In addition to imported pedigree cattle, two technological innovations were essential to this endeavor: barbed wire fencing, to keep the mixed-blood stock enclosed in order to prevent roaming creole cattle from breeding with them; and the steel plow, developed to conquer the native deep-rooted grasses of the U.S. Great Plains. The steel plow was needed in the pampa to dig up native grasses so that alfalfa, also protected from marauding creole cattle by barbed wire, could be cultivated to feed the genetically improving bovines.

Huge capital investment in infrastructure underpinned the new beef economy and brought large-scale technological change. By 1914, Argentina had received \$3.2 billion in direct foreign investment, half of it British; this represented approximately

Argentina Today Fact Box





Area: 1,073,518 square miles

Population: 43,431,886

Population growth rate: 0.93%

Urban population: 91.8% of total

Ethnic composition: white 97%, mestizo and indigenous 3%

Religious affiliation (nominal): Catholic 92%, Protestant 2%, Jewish 2%, and other 4%

Life expectancy: 77.69 years

Literacy: 98.1%

Years of schooling (average): 17 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$22,600

Percentage of population living in poverty: 30%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 32.3% and lowest 1.5%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 0.91%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 59.7%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

40 percent of all foreign investment in Latin America. Railroads were essential, as cattle headed for export could not be driven overland without toughening the meat. Argentina's first track was laid in 1857; by 1913, the country had Latin America's most extensive rail network, twenty thousand miles of mainly British-owned track radiating out into the interior from Buenos Aires and the river ports of Rosario and Santa Fe—clearly designed for the export economy rather than for tying the country together. Originally, cattle were herded onto steamships at Buenos Aires and upriver cities in ports deepened by steam-powered dredging and modernized by steam-driven loading equipment. In 1876, a French steamship, the *Frigorifique*, launched the era of chilled and frozen beef exports to Europe. This technological innovation gave rise to the *frigorficos*, or meat-packing plants that proliferated near the ports. In addition to beef, other animal-based exports included lamb, wool, and hides.

The rise of a grain export economy further transformed Argentina. As late as the 1870s, the country was a net importer of wheat; by 1909, it had become the world's largest wheat exporter. This turnaround occurred in tandem with the development of the beef export economy. The contraction of roaming creole cattle created space for wheat, which the steel plow made possible to grow and barbed wire protected from the remaining feral stock. Horse-drawn binding and threshing machines, developed for use on the U.S. plains, made possible a fifteen-fold expansion of wheat



Buenos Aires harbor, c. 1910

Source: Library of Congress

cultivation between 1872 and 1895, to some twenty-two million acres. Wheat rode the same rails as cattle, to flour mills that sprouted along the Paraná River and in Buenos Aires, and used the same ports for loading onto steamships bound for Europe. Besides wheat, grain exports included maize, barley, rye, and linseed.

The total value of Argentine exports grew ten times in the forty years between 1871–1874 and 1911–1914, and more than doubled again by the late 1920s. This spectacular economic growth, which made Argentines confident that their country would soon surpass the United States as hemispheric leader, was underpinned by the millions of dollars of British investment and by technologies developed in the Industrial Revolution. But it would not have been possible without an influx of human capital that made Juan Bautista Alberdi's dream of burying the rustic gauchos beneath a wave of European immigrants come true (Chapter 3).

Between 1857 and 1914, Argentina received some five million European immigrants, at a pace that increased substantially in the 1880s. Of these, approximately 3.5 million stayed in Argentina. Poverty, famine, loss of land, destruction of artisanry in competition with manufactures, politics, and war—the same forces that drove greater numbers of Europeans to the United States during the same period—pushed these immigrants out of their homelands. Some were attracted by colonization companies offering free passage and promises of land—promises that often failed to materialize. Most were lured by news of opportunities and by very affordable passage on steamships that carried exports to Europe and had space available on the



Dining room of immigrant hotel, Buenos Aires, c. 1910

Source: Library of Congress

return voyage. Passage became so cheap that thousands of Italian peasants migrated annually as *golondrinas* (swallows returning to the same nests every year) during the European winter, when they were idle at home, to the Southern Hemisphere summer where they worked the wheat harvest, moving in droves from north to south and returning home with money in their pockets in time for spring planting. Of the immigrants who settled, many initially worked on cattle or wheat estancias but found greater opportunities in the cities, particularly in rapidly growing Buenos Aires.

The 3.5 million immigrants who became permanent residents, along with their offspring, swelled the Argentina population from 1.7 million in 1869 to 4 million in 1895 to nearly 8 million in 1914, when the outbreak of World War I temporarily halted immigration. During the same period, the United States absorbed around twenty-five million immigrants. Yet, Argentina was much more a country of immigrants than the United States. At the high point of the Great Migration, 14.4 percent of the U.S. population was foreign born; building on a far smaller pre-immigration population, Argentina reached a high point of 30.3 percent foreign born in 1914; in Buenos Aires, the figure was around 50 percent. Italians and Spaniards predominated among immigrants to Argentina, while people from all of Europe and small numbers from the non-European areas of the Ottoman Empire rounded out the mix. The era of mass migration also gave Argentina by far Latin America's largest Jewish population.

During the period of the export economies, the capital cities of Latin America engaged in an undeclared competition to become the Paris of the hemisphere. Virtually all capitals built a national theater in imported European style, along with civic buildings, boulevards, and new residential neighborhoods for the elites—all reflecting export-based wealth—but only a few capitals were contenders for the title. At its centennial celebration of independence in 1910, Mexico City showcased the beautiful, monument-rich Paseo de la Reforma, a new central post office in Italianate style, and a neoclassical communications building. Construction of the sumptuous Palace of Fine Arts, planned for the centennial, ran into difficulties and was finally completed in 1934. Santiago offered the wide Alameda de las Delicias, the ornate stock exchange, the Club de la Unión, the neoclassical National Library, and elite neighborhoods reflecting the financial bounty of nitrate exports. Rio de Janeiro boasted new boulevards, the Theatro Municipal, the Palácio Monroe, the Palácio Laranjeiras, and the colossal, almost-finished statue of Christ the Redeemer overlooking the city.

But Buenos Aires was the clear winner. It had the elegant Retiro railroad station, beautiful neighborhoods, fancy restaurants, upscale department stores, and halls where the tango (a Buenos Aires invention) was danced. It featured paved streets lit by electricity, electric streetcars, and water and sewer systems. It had Latin America's first subway, opened in 1913. The Colón Theatre, with its acclaimed décor and acoustics—rivalled only by the Milan opera house—attracted the world's premier opera and repertory companies. And Buenos Aires boasted the world's widest boulevard, the Avenida de Mayo which, as Baron Haussmann had done with his elegant Parisian boulevards, erased older parts of the city in the interest of progress.



Club de la Unión, Santiago, Chile

Source: Library of Congress

European visitors were reminded of Paris, and today's tourist is still dazzled by the Buenos Aires of a century ago.

While Argentina underwent the greatest transformation as the result of integration into the world economy, other countries lagged. Paraguay failed to develop products for the world market. Haiti's participation in the world economy was minimal and therefore had little transformative power. The basic problem for Haiti was that its formerly dynamic sugar export economy had been destroyed during the slave-led independence movement. With cane fields burned, sugar mills destroyed, and capital gone, Haiti's leaders were hard pressed to promote development. By the late nineteenth century, Haiti exported coffee and cacao, but in low volume.

Honduras may have experienced the least change of all Latin American countries that participated robustly in the world market. Whereas Argentina's export economy stimulated economic development and modernization throughout the country, Honduras's export economy developed as an enclave that remained largely separate from the domestic economy. Honduras's primary export was bananas, which accounted for 50 percent of the total value of its exports in 1913 and reached nearly 80 percent in the late 1920s. While banana production was important throughout Central America as well as in Colombia, Ecuador, and some Caribbean islands, no other republic was so beholden to the tropical fruit as Honduras—the world's largest banana exporter.

Bananas were introduced into the Caribbean from Africa early in the colonial period, but their production was localized and limited. In the mid-1800s, a few ship

captains began picking up stalks of the fruit to sell in New Orleans and other gulf ports. Presentation of bananas wrapped in tinfoil at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition boosted the fruit's popularity, and the demand for bananas in the United States grew until the potential for major exports of the fruit became clear. U.S. entrepreneurs then rushed to form companies for the cultivation of bananas on plantations in the Caribbean lowlands of Central America. They acquired huge tracts of land in the steamy, lightly populated north coast of Honduras by purchase or concessions offered by a government anxious to enter the world economy. Failing to lure many Hondurans from the interior to the disease-ridden lowlands to develop the plantations, railroads, and port facilities needed to grow and ship the bananas, the companies imported most of their labor from Jamaica and other West Indian islands.

In 1899, a merger of banana and shipping companies formed the United Fruit Company (UFCO). After this consolidation, UFCO enjoyed the dominant position in Honduran banana production and exports. It became a vertically integrated organization, developing its own railroads and ports and an inventory of over one hundred ships, known as the Great White Fleet, to ship the fruit to the United States. To fill the ships for the return voyage and to economize on provisioning its workers, the company imported virtually all the food, clothing, and other goods consumed on its plantations via the fleet. The banana enclave on the north coast was essentially autonomous from the rest of the country, and it was more closely tied to the United States than to the republic of Honduras. The cities on the north coast, San Pedro Sula and La Ceiba, prospered from their location while Tegucigalpa stagnated.

By importing labor and supplies, UFCO injected little money into the Honduran economy through payroll or the purchase of food and other essentials from national sources. Having financial resources far greater than the national government of Honduras, UFCO shaped official policy so that it paid very little in property and export taxes. It promised to build a railroad connecting Tegucigalpa with the coast but reneged, leaving Honduras with the only capital city in Latin America, with the exception of land-locked Paraguay, not connected to a seaport by rail. Thus compared to Argentina's transformative insertion into the world market, Honduras's participation in the global economy brought little development and modernization beyond the banana enclave itself.

UFCO not only dominated Honduras, but it was also the largest and most powerful entity in Central America, and it later expanded to Colombia and Ecuador and several Caribbean islands. It was known as "the octopus" for the extent and variety of its enterprises and its political power in the region. In addition to the Great White Fleet and the ports it built and owned, UFCO by 1912 controlled most of Guatemala's railroads through the International Railways of Central America and soon extended its railroad network to El Salvador. In 1913, UFCO established the Tropical Radio and Telegraph Company that served much of Central America. The company thus achieved a near-monopoly of transportation and communication and charged high, even exorbitant rates for its services. To gain concessions of land and operating rights and to keep its taxes low, UFCO bribed government officials and even fomented coups on occasion. As a result of its dominance of Central America, UFCO became one of the primary symbols of "Yankee imperialism" (Chapter 6).

Honduras Today Fact Box



Area: 43,278 square miles

Population: 8,746,673

Population growth rate: 1.68%

Urban population: 54.7%

Ethnic composition: mestizo 90%, Amerindian 7%, black 2%, and white 1%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 97% and Protestant 3%

Life expectancy: 71 years

Literacy: 88.5%

Years of schooling (average): 11 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$4,900

Percentage of population living in poverty: 60%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 42.4% and lowest 0.4%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 1.05%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 19.4%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product



Hauling bananas in Central America

Source: Library of Congress

Honduras's banana economy was far from the only export enclave in Latin America; mining operations usually developed in enclaves, but most of them were not as autonomous from their host countries as was Honduras's banana zone. Whether in the Andes of Peru and Bolivia or the northern deserts of Mexico, and whether nationally or foreign-owned, mining companies normally hired local workers for most

of the jobs they created and purchased food and other supplies from the region in which they operated. Mined ore had to be transported by railroad, the construction and operation of which created more jobs, and mining normally paid significant taxes. Thus while mining did not transform countries as completely as Argentina's agricultural exports did, it normally contributed more than bananas did in Honduras to national economic development.

Chile offers an example of a mining enclave that contributed importantly to a country's economic progress. Chile wrested the nitrate-rich provinces of Tarapacá and Antofagasta from Peru and Bolivia, respectively, in the 1879–1883 War of the Pacific. The government then sold concessions for extracting nitrates, which were in great demand in Europe as fertilizer and the basis of gunpowder, to both Chilean and British operators. Recruiters scoured Chile's agricultural regions for workers, luring tens of thousands to the remote desert area with promises of high wages. The agricultural heartland, the Central Valley, supplied the nitrate zone with most of the food and drink consumed there; the government even levied a high tariff on Argentine cattle to secure the market for Chilean cattlemen. The export tax on nitrates, set at 10 percent of value, brought in half the government's revenue from 1890 to World War I. While agricultural producers prospered, the government used its windfall revenue to build a railroad system that knit the country together, create a national system of public education, and expand the bureaucracy. In the Chilean case, the mining enclave was the primary driving force of the country's substantial economic development during the era of the export economies.

THE PRICE OF PROGRESS: ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY DEEPENED

While generating wealth and modernizing major parts of Latin America, the export economies also created problems. One of these was the establishment of a new relationship of economic dependency. As colonies, the future Latin American countries had been subject to economic control by the mother countries of Spain and Portugal. This meant that the basic economic policies—matters such as what could be produced in the colonies and the regulation of trade—were not made in Latin America but in Europe. Those restrictions disappeared with independence, but with massive foreign investment and the sale of Latin America's products in the world market, an even stronger dependency arose after 1870.

The Latin American countries depended on forces that they could not control. Decisions about global investment strategy were made in European and U.S. corporate boardrooms: for example, decisions on whether to open a new copper mine in Mexico, Chile, Montana, or Northern Rhodesia (today's Zambia), or whether to put more capital into banana production in Guatemala or Colombia. Some foreign companies became so large and wealthy that they dominated or at least heavily

influenced politics in the countries where they invested, to their advantage. Such was clearly the case of UFCO in Central America. Moreover, foreign investors normally had access to much more capital than did national entrepreneurs, and thus could and sometimes did drive Latin American–owned firms out of business. Foreign investors had the advantage of being backed by their governments, which could use diplomatic pressure to protect and promote their nationals' interests in Latin America. By the turn of the twentieth century, U.S. investors in the Caribbean Basin had the additional advantage of military backing (Chapter 6).

The price of commodities on the world market was also beyond Latin America's control. Countries that relied on a single export product were the most vulnerable. For example, the cost of Cuba's heavy reliance on sugar was illustrated by an extreme price swing following World War I. Pent-up demand drove sugar to a record high by May 1920; then the world market price fell by over 80 percent over the next few months, with serious social as well as economic repercussions. Coffee prices were subject to downward pressure as worldwide production grew, often outstripping demand. The two countries that developed quite diversified export economies, Mexico and Peru, enjoyed some protection against international price swings as falling prices for some commodities might be offset by rising prices for others. Since most of Argentina's exports were food staples, the country's economic development was relatively steady.

There were other hazards to dependence on exports—particularly on a single product. Plant disease and hurricanes were constant threats to banana production and caused considerable income fluctuation. Disease decimated Ecuador's cacao industry, which accounted for nearly two-thirds of all exports in the 1910s. Chile relied heavily on nitrates after 1880 until German scientists developed a commercially feasible system for making synthetic nitrates during World War I, ruining the market for the natural product. Luckily for Chile's economic welfare, copper exports rose just as nitrates fell, but with its price vulnerable to fluctuations in industrial demand and to competition from other copper-producing areas, copper kept Chile locked in economic dependency.

Rubber is another case in point. The discovery of vulcanization in the 1840s led to new industrial uses of rubber, which created a significant rubber tree-tapping economy along the Amazon and its tributaries by the 1880s. The advent of the automobile age at the turn of the twentieth century further stoked demand, creating a boom in Brazil and to a lesser extent in the upper Amazonian territories of Peru and Bolivia. The rubber boom created misery for Amazon natives, who had been largely ignored by the governments of their countries but who were now virtually enslaved to collect the valuable substance. So lucrative was the business that it justified the construction of a 225-mile-long railroad deep in the jungle, the Madeira–Mamoré railway, to ship rubber from the interior Amazon to Europe and the United States. The ornate opera house in Manaus, a boom town that sprang up on the Brazilian Amazon, stands today as a monument to the opulence of the rubber era.

In 1913, the year after the completion of the Madeira–Mamoré railway, the Amazon boom ended under severe competition from Asia. A British national had taken seeds of the wild rubber trees to London in the 1870s, where they were successfully grown into trees in the Royal Botanical Gardens and transplanted to the British colonies of Malaya (Malaysia) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The tapping of wild trees in the Amazon could not compete with the more efficient and productive rubber plantations in Asia, and a rapid decline set in. On the eve of the collapse, rubber accounted for some 16 percent of the value of Brazil’s exports, second only to coffee.

During this period, there was one relatively successful instance of Latin American raw material producers’ intervention in the world market to protect commodity prices. Despite growing production in Central America, Colombia, and a few other countries, Brazil dominated the world coffee market in the first decade of the twentieth century, exporting 80 percent of the world’s supply. In 1906, a bumper crop eroded world market prices. With the country relying on coffee for some two-thirds of its export income, the governments of the major coffee states quickly responded by taking large amounts of coffee stock off the market, in a scheme referred to as “valorization.” This unilateral move stabilized coffee prices, although at a lower level than before, and Brazil repeated the maneuver twice more before the Great Depression sank the coffee market.

INDIANS AND THE EXPORT ECONOMIES

Another result of the rise of the export economies was the appropriation of much of the region’s surviving Indian-occupied land. As we have seen, Argentine agricultural and cattle production expanded after 1880 into the interior inhabited by Indians. Coinciding with the Argentine “conquest of the desert,” the Chilean government brought Aruacanian land south of the colonial Bío-Bío frontier under national control and Mexican authorities took aim at the northern territory occupied by Yaqui, Apache, and other Indians just as the United States completed its seizure of valuable native lands.

But much of the land that had potential for development was not on the fringe, but in the heart of several countries where native communally owned villages had survived three colonial centuries and a half-century of independence. Most Indians in communal villages practiced subsistence agriculture while sometimes producing small surpluses to sell or trade outside their communities. The potential of these lands to produce exportable products and feed growing cities increased their value. Thus, a major consequence of Latin America’s integration into the world economy was the transfer of millions of acres of Indian-owned land into non-Indian hands, most of it in the form of large landed estates. Following the appropriation of their land, millions of Indians became a rural proletariat, often working on their own

ancestral land for the new landowners. Others were forced to migrate to mining camps or cities in search of survival.

In Mexico, thousands of traditional Indian communal landowning villages, or *ejidos*, had survived in the central and southern parts of the country. Driven by the lure of profit and aided by a new land law enacted in 1894, large landowners and entrepreneurs set their sights on those *ejidos*, whose occupants were required to produce valid titles to their land. Many, of course, had no such titles; those who did, illiterate and often not Spanish-speaking, faced overwhelming odds against well-heeled lawyers and judges who ruled in favor of the powerful. By 1910, over five thousand *ejidos* had lost some or all of the land that their ancestors had held for centuries or longer. At the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution in 1910, over half of all rural Mexicans lived on haciendas, often working the very land that they had until recently owned.

In Guatemala and El Salvador, the driving force of the assault on Indian land was coffee. With the arrival of railroads linking ports with the interiors of those countries, slowly growing coffee exports mushroomed: Guatemala's grew nearly 500 percent between 1873 and 1900, while El Salvador's followed a similar path. By 1914, coffee accounted for 80 percent of El Salvador's exports and 85 percent of Guatemala's.

Because most landed Indian communities in Guatemala were located above the two thousand- to five thousand-foot elevation most suitable for coffee culture, many of them survived. But most of those located in the coffee-growing altitudes succumbed to an 1877 law requiring privatization of communal land and to pressure from planters. As coffee expanded, the need for labor became acute. Still anchored to their villages and practicing subsistence agriculture, the highland Maya Indians would only sell their labor to the planters under duress. This necessary compulsion took the form of forced labor, legalized debt peonage, and vagrancy laws. In 1876, the government revived the colonial *mandamiento*, or labor draft. The following year, a law established Guatemala's notorious vagrancy law that required all male Indians to carry a *libreta*, or notebook, that recorded their contract for coffee work and the number of days they had worked to fulfill their obligation. Those who could not prove that they were contracted to a plantation for seasonal work were declared vagrants and subject to the *mandamiento*. Most of those who contracted with growers accepted advances on their wages, which ensnared them in debt servitude and required them to return to the same plantation season after season. Although formally abolished in 1894, the *mandamiento* persisted into the 1920s and the vagrancy law until 1944.

In El Salvador, a mix of communal Indian villages and mestizo smallholders occupied the lands best suited for coffee. In 1881 and 1882, the government enacted laws that abolished communal property and divided it into individual plots, easing the way for planters to take over through purchase or legal trickery. Vagrancy laws similar to Guatemala's were instituted in 1881, and a rural constabulary was created

for their enforcement. Confiscation of the best coffee land enriched El Salvador's oligarchy, known as the "fourteen families." Despite resistance, by the 1920s, the great majority of small landowners had been proletarianized and impoverished, but more punishment awaited them. The Great Depression decimated coffee prices and created mass unemployment. In 1932, government troops confronted protesting idled workers, resulting in one of Latin America's worst massacres: Between ten thousand and thirty thousand poor Salvadorans were killed in what became known as *La Matanza* (the slaughter).

The Andean highlands of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia were the other region where Indian communal landholding was traditional and widespread. At the time of independence, Bolivia was the most Indian of the new republics, at 75 percent of the population. Two groups constituted the great majority of Indians: two-thirds were speakers of Quechua (the language of the Inca Empire) and one-third were Aymara. The assault on their lands began with 1866 and 1868 laws, at the onset of the revival of silver mining which linked the country to the world market. Issued by the caudillo Mariano Melgarejo, the laws ordered the sale of all communal lands (*ayllus*), allowing communities to purchase their own lands within ninety days before public bidding began. An 1874 law went further: It abolished the *ayllu* altogether and allowed individual Indians to buy private plots. Further laws in the 1880s continued the same process. As elsewhere, illiterate, non-Spanish-speaking Indians found it very difficult to defend themselves against hacendados and lawyers. Much land was lost; but true to the colonial Andean tradition of rebellion against oppression, Indians defended their land by force, successfully in several areas. The best known and largest of these rebellions, the one led by Zárate "el temible" (the fearsome) Willka, broke out in 1899.

Despite fierce resistance, Indian land loss accelerated as the new tin export economy that replaced silver by 1900 created large mining camps and spurred urban growth, increasing rural land values. According to an 1846 census, prior to the rise of exports, 63 percent of Indians lived on *ayllus*; in 1900, after their numbers had grown by around 50 percent, only 27 percent of the larger Indian population clung to their *ayllus*. In 1880, haciendas occupied one-third of the land on the altiplano, home of the densest Indian population; by the 1920s, the figure was two-thirds. Living and working conditions on the haciendas were extremely oppressive and exploitive. In 1952, Indians would rise throughout the country to take back their land in the Bolivian Revolution (Chapter 8).

In neighboring Peru, Indians retained most of their land until late in the nineteenth century because most export commodities—guano, sugar, and cotton—came from the coast rather than from the Andean highlands where *ayllus* were concentrated. By the 1890s, however, the export economy picked up steam, railroads penetrated the Andes, mining operations proliferated, urban demand for foodstuffs grew, and Indians faced growing pressure from hacendados backed by regional political bosses, or *gamonales*. Despite considerable

loss, numerous *ayllus* survived and Peru's 1920 constitution recognized them as protected legal entities.

As with Peru, Ecuador's export economy, based primarily on cacao, was located on the coast, far from Indian communal lands in the Andes. Ecuadorian Indians had to fend off expansionist hacendados who coveted their land, but faced no organized legal assault on their properties. After a railroad finally linked Quito with Guayaquil and the coast in 1908, and with the growth of urban markets, Indians faced more pressure to protect their land, but managed to hold onto much of it.

Accompanying and legitimizing the assault on Indian communal lands from Mexico to Bolivia was the pseudoscientific racism propagated by Count Gobineau, Herbert Spencer, and others, which became popular among Latin America's elites in the later nineteenth century. To them, the superiority of whites was a given; people of all other races were considered manifestly inferior. But Latin American proponents of these theories split over whether Indians were hopelessly savage and backward, or whether they could be redeemed through tutelage and benevolence on the part of their superiors and eventually assimilated.

For the Mexican Francisco Bulnes, Indians were beyond redemption: "The Indian takes no interest in things, is stoical, unenlightened. . . . He loves seriously only four things: the idols of his old religion, the land that gives him his food, his personal freedom, and alcohol. . . . The only great occasion he knows is the wake: the presence of a corpse seems to bring him joy, and make him dance."¹ In 1909, Bolivian Alcides Arguedas described the Aymara Indian of his country as "savage and wild like a beast of the forest, dedicated to his pagan rituals and to the cultivation of that sterile soil in which, no doubt, his race will soon become extinct."² On the other hand, the Ecuadorian intellectual Luis Martínez well summarized the redemption argument in a 1904 presentation: "I speak in the name of a race, a race that deserves a different fate, because the Indian is not the stupid human being who cannot become civilized, he is not the idiot imagined by some people. . . . It is a race that still can be what it was before the white man enslaved it in [the] name of a religion that prohibits [Indian] slavery."³

Both positions justified depriving Indians of their land: If they were completely incompetent and savage, whites should take the land and make it productive without regard to the outcome for the Indian; on the other hand, if they were capable of improvement within their permanent state of inferiority, they must be separated from their historic insularity on the communal lands and brought into the company of their white superiors, who might impart some lessons in civilization while exploiting their labor.

THE END OF AFRICAN SLAVERY

While Indians' fortunes declined during the era of the export economies, the other group that inhabited the base of the colonial social hierarchy, African slaves,

experienced a singularly positive development. The last holdouts of slavery in the Americas were Brazil and Spain's Caribbean colonies of Puerto Rico and Cuba. The United States' abolition of slavery during the Civil War, in 1863, ratcheted up pressure on the institution where it persisted, as did growing international condemnation. Both Spain and Brazil ended slavery incrementally. Just as many of the new Spanish American republics had done half a century earlier, they adopted "free womb" laws in 1870 and 1871, respectively; while no more slaves were born thereafter, children of slave mothers were obligated to serve lengthy apprenticeships with the mother's owner—a condition that differed little from actual slavery.

Puerto Rico was smaller and less productive than Cuba, and slavery there was far less important as slaves accounted for only 5 percent of the population by 1870. An influential domestic abolition movement developed, and even some members of the landowning class became advocates. Three years after the free womb law (the Moret Law), the Spanish *cortes* abolished slavery in Puerto Rico with compensation to owners.

Abolition in Cuba was more problematic, as the island was the cash cow of Spain's greatly diminished empire. Cuban sugar exports mushroomed during the nineteenth century, and the Spanish government was reluctant to jeopardize the benefits that the homeland enjoyed by tinkering with a labor system that was deeply rooted on the island. Momentum for abolition came from the first war of independence, the Ten Years' War (1868–1878), which ended in failure. Abolition was one of the rebels' goals; and in 1880, Spain enacted a new emancipation law that freed specified numbers of slaves annually, although the beneficiaries also had to continue serving their former masters for several years. A growing acceptance of the notion that sugar could thrive with free labor weakened opposition to abolition on the island. Succumbing to growing domestic and international pressure, Regent Maria Cristina abolished slavery in Cuba by royal decree in 1886 when only twenty-five thousand persons remained enslaved.

In Brazil, an important factor in abolition was the regionalization of slavery. As the traditional sugar economy of the northeast continued its long decline, the coffee export economy centered in the São Paulo region took off, creating a huge demand for labor. As slaves were sold south, the north retained few slaves and no reason to defend the institution on which it had relied so heavily in the colonial period; indeed, two northern states abolished slavery in 1884 and two more followed shortly thereafter. Following the free womb law of 1871 (the Rio Branco Law), which heralded the end of slavery, the Brazilian government began aggressively and successfully recruiting European immigrants who had been loath to enter a labor market dominated by slaves. Large-scale immigration assured Brazilians that labor would be available without slavery. Dissatisfaction with the results of the Rio Branco Law—the children of slaves still being held as virtual slaves—gave rise to a strong national abolition movement in the late 1870s that raised pressure on the national Congress. Emperor Dom Pedro II, a long-time opponent of slavery, weighed in more aggressively. By the mid-1880s, slaves began abandoning their positions en masse, and the Brazilian

army refused to carry out its traditional role of slave catcher. As a result, the number of enslaved dropped from some 1.35 million in 1883 to 723,000 in 1887, the year before the “Golden Law” definitively abolished slavery.

Latin America’s insertion into the first global economy profoundly transformed much of the region. The era of the export economies not only brought material progress, modernization, and political order, but it also further entrenched economic dependency. Massive loss of Indian land and the final abolition of African slavery affected the lower ranks of society without fundamentally altering the legacy of a rigid social hierarchy. Progress during this period was real, but it was selective.

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5

Political Consolidation and Social Change

After a gradual transition from the difficult postindependence years, by the 1880s major parts of Latin America had undergone remarkable political change. In contrast to the instability of the early years, several Latin American countries were characterized by stable and effective governments. These governments were not democracies; they were run by and for the elites, not the masses. These stable governments came in two basic forms: long-term dictatorships and elected oligarchic regimes that had the form but not the substance of democracy. In the countries with elected governments, voting was limited to those few men who could meet property and literacy requirements, which prevented the great majority of the population from participating in political life. Most of the dictatorships of the period also held elections, but they were rigged so that the incumbent dictator was assured of continuing in office.

POSITIVISM

Regardless of their form, many of the new regimes were influenced in varying degrees by the European doctrine of positivism—a philosophy developed in France by Auguste Comte, a founder of the modern discipline of sociology, who published his six-volume *Cours de philosophie positive* between 1830 and 1842. According to Comte, humans had evolved through three stages: the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive. While the earliest stage revolved around religious dogmas and the second involved the political and philosophical abstractions characteristic of the Enlightenment, the culminating stage was grounded in empiricism and science. The task of individuals and governments during the positive stage was to promote political order and material progress and leave aside ideas and debates that distracted them from that goal.

Latin America provided the most fertile ground for positivism to blossom. Educated Latin Americans could equate Comte's concept of human evolution with their own history. The theological stage was the colonial period when the powerful and monopolistic Catholic Church held sway and, to liberals, kept people in a state of ignorance and passivity. The metaphysical stage in Latin America coincided with the postindependence period of ideological conflict between conservatives and liberals that led to instability, caudillo rule, and brutal civil wars such as Mexico's War of the Reform that cost dearly in lives and inflicted heavy material damage. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, when political order and material progress were beginning to take hold in several countries, the idea of putting ideological conflict aside and concentrating on the business of the "positive" period had wide appeal.

Positivists were found throughout Latin America, but they held greatest sway in Mexico and Brazil. The apostle of positivism in Mexico was Gabino Barreda, an early convert and director of the National Preparatory School in the 1860s and 1870s under President Benito Juárez. Positivist doctrine spread outward from the school, strongly influencing the men who would set the direction of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship, chief among them Díaz's Secretary of the Treasury José Ives Limantour. The leader of the Brazilian positivists was Benjamin Constant Botelho de Magalhães, who wrote about the doctrine and, along with his disciples, taught it in military schools and universities. Embracing modernity, positivists viewed the Brazilian monarchy as outdated and advocated replacing it with a republic. When the republic was established in 1889, ending the long-lived empire, it adopted a new flag with the positivist slogan "order and progress" emblazoned on it; this slogan remains on Brazil's flag today.

LONG-TERM DICTATORSHIPS: MEXICO AND VENEZUELA

After experiencing its rocky start as an independent country, Mexico well illustrates the transition to stable and effective government. Following the defeat of the French-imposed Emperor Maximilian in 1867, Juárez resumed his interrupted presidency. In 1872, he was succeeded by Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada. Both liberal presidents pursued modernizing policies: public education, railroad construction, tax reform, and internal security, and the instability of previous years began to fade. Yet despite their efforts, Mexico in 1876 still more closely resembled the Spanish colony it had been than the dynamic, modernizing country it would soon become. No more than 5 percent of children attended school; bandits infested roads throughout the country, and those roads were hardly worthy of the name. Vagrants multiplied in the cities and towns. There was no true national economy; the sharp geographic divisions instead had created a series of self-sufficient regional economies. However, there were signs of change: defeat of the French kindled a sense of nationalism that had been absent before, and the opening of the Veracruz–Mexico City railroad in 1873 promised a connection to the emerging world market.

Mexico's transition to stability and development was synonymous with one man: Porfirio Díaz, a mestizo born in the southern city of Oaxaca in 1830. He studied first for the priesthood, then law, but made his mark in the military. His star rose after he played a critical role in the defeat of the French army at Puebla on May 5, 1862, temporarily halting its advance on Mexico City. This was a rare victory of Mexican arms over a foreign adversary, celebrated more in the United States than in Mexico as the *cinco de mayo*. A liberal, Díaz ran an unsuccessful campaign for president against Juárez in 1871. Following his loss, he launched a weak rebellion, castigating Juárez for his longevity in office. Following Juárez's death in 1872, he ran again and lost. When Juárez's successor, Lerdo de Tejada, announced for reelection in 1876, Díaz launched his Plan de Tuxtepec, an indictment of Lerdo de Tejada's presidency and an announcement of the principle he proposed to instill in Mexican politics: "effective suffrage and no re-election." Successful in his rebellion, Díaz forgot about his slogan and stayed in power through multiple reelections, lending his name to his thirty-four-year reign: the Porfiriato.

Recognizing Mexico's potential in the global economy, Díaz and his advisors focused on establishing the political stability that would give foreigners the confidence to bring their capital and technology to develop Mexico's exportable resources. Thus, they set out to eliminate the sources of instability that had plagued the republic, some of them since its inception. Díaz beefed up the rural constabulary, the *rurales* that Juárez had established, and charged it with eliminating the banditry that disturbed order and impeded commerce. The army, a constant threat of rebellion and destabilization, had been reduced in size by Juárez; Díaz provided it a budget adequate for payroll and equipment with enough left over for graft among the officer corps. He also rotated his generals so that none developed deep ties to a region and its troops, and with growing railroad and telegraph networks, he could anticipate and defeat any rebellions that might occur.

Knowing from Mexico's history that unpaid foreign debt offered an excuse for foreign military intervention, as in the Pastry War and the French occupation, Díaz paid as much and as fast as possible to foreign creditors. The church question had been the core issue that embroiled Mexico in civil war and foreign conquest following enactment of the 1857 constitution. Díaz kept the anticlerical laws on the books but did not enforce them rigorously, thus striking a compromise between liberals and conservatives on that issue. Finally, Díaz co-opted the regional caudillos and powerful families by inviting them into the political machine he was creating. If they cooperated by delivering their states' votes to his reelections, they earned governorships and lucrative business contracts. If they refused to cooperate or challenged him, he responded with force. Díaz called this approach to politics his "patriarchal policy," while others called it "*pan o palo*" (bread or the club). By attacking the traditional sources of instability, he created the first effective central government since independence.

In Mexico, the establishment of stable and effective governance was achieved through dictatorship that preserved the trappings but not the substance of the liberal



Porfirio Díaz

Source: Library of Congress

state developed after the age of Santa Anna. Díaz stepped aside after his first term in favor of a placeholder, true to his promise of “effective suffrage and no re-election.” But from 1884 on, he was regularly reelected along with a national Congress, state governors and legislatures, and municipal officers—all decided in advance by Díaz and his collaborators.

Political stability and development of the export economy went hand in hand. As signs of stability emerged, foreign capital flowed into Mexico, enhancing government revenues and ensuring adequate military budgets. Foreigners invested in railroads, mining, petroleum, banking, and utilities, while primarily domestic capital developed cattle, cotton, sugar, henequen, and manufacturing, including a steel mill that opened at Monterrey in 1900. By 1908, Mexico had fifteen thousand miles of railroad track and the telegraph reached into remote areas, reinforcing Díaz’s ability to maintain political control.

Mexico’s foreign trade grew by nearly ten times during Díaz’s dictatorship, each increase bringing more tariff revenue. In 1894, Mexico achieved a balanced budget for the first time in its independent history; Mexican bonds were selling above par by 1900. In September 1910, when Porfirio Díaz presided over the glittering centennial

of Father Miguel Hidalgo's *Grito de Dolores*, he was justifiably proud of his achievements. But while most of the foreign dignitaries attending the centennial were unaware of the other side of the Porfiriato—the human cost of the glowing statistics and the political calm—Mexicans were not.

Venezuela offers another example of government stability and economic development through dictatorship—in this case, multiple dictatorships. Initially included in the independent country of Gran Colombia, Venezuela along with Ecuador seceded in 1830. Venezuela's next two decades were dominated by the independence war hero General José Antonio Páez, who served two presidential terms and made and unmade other rulers.

The 1850s and 1860s were a period of frequent turnover in government. Regional caudillos were a continuous source of political instability, rebelling frequently and sometimes successfully against central authority. The turmoil was the result of not only personal ambition for power, but also of a struggle between liberals and conservatives over federalism versus centralism and over the church issue, culminating in the “federal wars” of 1859–1863. Federalism triumphed, but political instability did not recede until the advent of the first of four long-term dictators, General Antonio Guzmán Blanco. Guzmán Blanco served as president from 1870 to 1887, with two brief interludes, and presided over a regime clothed in the trappings but lacking the substance of an elected government. Guzmán Blanco cemented military dominance over politics, a tradition that lasted well into the twentieth century.

Guzmán Blanco, the self-proclaimed “Illustrious American,” came to power as the world market was taking shape. Along with Central America, Colombia, and Brazil, Venezuela expanded coffee production to meet the rising demand, while maintaining its significant export of cacao and hides. Like Porfirio Díaz, Guzmán Blanco governed by co-opting or suppressing the regional caudillos, leading to the country's first prolonged period of stability. This stability, along with enhanced income from the growing export economy, allowed Venezuela to access foreign credit and Guzmán Blanco to improve the efficiency of the national army, introduce railroads and the telegraph, and modernize Caracas, bringing contemporary European style to the former colonial regional capital. By 1887, the Illustrious American had lost his ability to balance Venezuela's political forces and left for exile in Europe.

Following a period of instability, two more generals took power and restored order: Joaquín Crespo (president 1892–1898) and Cipriano Castro (president 1899–1908). This period featured further integration into the world economy and growth of modern infrastructure in both cities and countryside. By the 1890s, all major cities were connected by a French-operated telegraph system and by either railroads or improved cartage roads. Castro's failure to pay foreign debts led to an embarrassing international incident in 1902–1903, when British, German, and Italian warships blockaded Venezuela's coast and shelled ports until, under pressure from the United States, Castro agreed to arbitration that resolved the crisis.

The last of Venezuela's long-term dictators, General Juan Vicente Gómez, overthrew Castro in 1908 to launch twenty-seven years of personal governance. Gómez

ruled as head of the army and through a secret police force that he developed. He squelched normal political life: While retaining an elected but pliant Congress, he dissolved parties and silenced, jailed, tortured, exiled, or killed both real and imagined opponents.

It was during Gómez's dictatorship that oil became Venezuela's primary export, and it has remained so to the present. The Caribbean Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of Royal Dutch Shell, began production in 1914. Three years later, the country's first oil refinery opened and exports of refined petroleum began. Venezuela enacted its first hydrocarbons law in 1920; in 1926, the value of oil exports surpassed that of coffee, and in 1929 Venezuela became the world's leading exporter of oil. Oil produced a bonanza for Gómez personally, for the government, and for a cadre of entrepreneurs and professionals who supplied goods and services to the foreign-owned petroleum companies. However, with the rise of petroleum, the country's primary export sector passed into foreign hands, enmeshing Venezuela's economy further in dependency.

Venezuela Today Fact Box





Area: 352,144 square miles

Population: 29,275,460

Population growth rate: 1.39%

Urban population: 89%

Ethnic composition: Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Arab, German, African, and indigenous people (no figures provided)

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 96%, Protestant 2%, and other 2%

Life expectancy: 74.54 years

Literacy: 96.3%

Years of schooling (average): 14 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$16,700

Percentage of population living in poverty: 32.1%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 32.7% and lowest 1.7%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 1%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 47.2%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

The Díaz regime in Mexico and Gómez's dictatorship in Venezuela perfectly illustrate the relationship between economic development and political stability that characterized much of Latin America during the era of the export economies. Essential to stability was the development of national armies capable of repelling uprisings by dissident caudillos seeking to overthrow governments—a frequent occurrence in most countries during the half-century following independence. As revenue flowed into the national treasuries, governments were able to purchase materiel for their armies—such as repeating rifles, Gatling guns, and artillery—that the opposition could not afford. Superiority in arms was supplemented by enhanced training. Latin American governments brought training missions from Britain, Germany, and France and sent top officers to European military academies for advanced study. By the early twentieth century, most countries had established military academies, based on European models, that educated and trained selected young men for membership in professional armies and navies. Coupled with the telegraph, which instantly sent news of actual or suspected rebellions to the government, and railroads and improved roads that expedited the dispatch of troops to areas of concern, the professional armies discouraged uprisings or crushed them before they could spread and threaten the government.

After the professionalization of Latin America's armed forces, old-style, caudillo-led rebellions rarely succeeded. Henceforth, most successful rebellions originated within the armed forces themselves. Thus military coups, rather than caudillo-led uprisings, became the standard non-electoral method of changing governments in the twentieth century.

ELECTED OLIGARCHIC REGIMES: COSTA RICA AND BRAZIL

The small Central American country of Costa Rica offers an example of a different type of stable and effective government that emerged during the era of the export economies: the elected oligarchic regime. Colonial Costa Rica was the southernmost administrative subdivision of the captaincy general of Guatemala, which in turn was subordinate to the viceroyalty of New Spain in Mexico City. Its small population of creoles and mestizos was concentrated in the compact Central Valley, with unassimilated natives living beyond. Apart from a small production of cacao for export, the cattle-raising and agricultural economy was self-sufficient. As a result of Costa Rica's remoteness and lack of economic importance, the royal bureaucracy and Catholic Church were less powerful than in more developed areas of the Spanish Empire. The breakup of the United Provinces of Central America in 1838 gave birth to the republic of Costa Rica, without the independence wars that ravished major parts of Mexico and Spanish South America.

Costa Rica was exporting small amounts of coffee by the 1830s. Early postindependence governments encouraged coffee cultivation with subsidies and free seedlings. In contrast to Argentina, Mexico, and other countries, Costa Rican governments distributed *baldíos*, or public lands, at modest prices in small holdings rather than in latifundia; as a result, in some new coffee-growing areas, up to 90 percent of the holdings were one hundred acres or less. These small holdings coexisted with the previously developed large landed estates dating from the colonial period.

Following the breakup of Central America, Costa Rica developed a pattern of governance that lasted to the 1870s. The large coffee planters of the Central Valley, the *cafetaleros*—who also tended to control the financing, processing, and marketing of the crop—dominated electoral politics by restricting the all-male vote through property and literacy requirements. Elections were controlled by presidents and fraud was commonly used to determine outcomes. The military, descended from the colonial militia, was the other political actor; shifting *cafetalero*–military alliances led to frequent uprisings and the overthrow of governments: In Costa Rica's first thirty-two years of independence, only four of fourteen presidents finished their terms.

The year 1870 was a turning point in Costa Rica's political development. Liberal Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez seized power in a coup, ruled as a strongman until 1882, and instituted important changes. Although a military man, Guardia set out to reform the military in order to establish civilian control in politics. He brought in European officers to improve training, raised salaries, and wrote a new military code. Given friction with neighboring Nicaragua over a potential canal through territory claimed by Costa Rica (Chapter 6), Guardia was able to focus the army on external defense rather than internal politics. This early case of professionalization of the armed forces brought stability to the political process: between 1870 and 1917, seven of nine presidents finished their terms or died in office of natural causes.

Costa Rica Today Fact Box





Area: 19,730 square miles

Population: 4,814,144

Population growth rate: 1.22%

Urban population: 76.8%

Ethnic composition: white or mestizo 83.6%, mulatto 6.7%, indigenous 12.4%, and black 1.1%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 76.3% and Protestant 15.7%

Life expectancy: 78.4 years

Literacy: 97.8%

Years of schooling (average): 15 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$15,500

Percentage of population living in poverty: 24.8%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 39.5% and lowest 1.2%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: no regular military forces

Internet users (percentage of total population): 50.9%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

Guardia did more than depoliticize the army. He dictated a new constitution in 1871 that strengthened executive power over Congress and over elections. He invested income from growing coffee exports in education, public health, transportation, ports, public buildings, and the bureaucracy. Guardia also included girls in the mandate for universal primary education and established the Colegio Superior de Señoritas to develop women teachers.

While coffee production grew more rapidly from the 1850s on, the export potential was limited by challenging terrain and inadequate transportation. Thus in 1871, Guardia contracted with U.S. citizen Henry Meiggs to build a railroad from Alajuela, in the Central Valley, to Puerto Limón, on the Caribbean—a distance of 117 miles. The financial terms proved difficult for the government and a bonanza for Meiggs and his nephew, Henry Meiggs Keith, who oversaw the project. In addition to financial incentives, Keith received control of the railroad and a ninety-nine-year lease on some eight hundred thousand acres of Caribbean lowlands, about 7 percent of the national territory. As in Honduras, sufficient labor could not be lured from the temperate highlands to the pestilential lowlands, leading Keith to import West Indian labor to build the railroad, modernize the port, and work the plantations he established in the region. Keith formed the Tropical Trading and Transport Company, which merged in 1899 with the Boston Fruit Company to form the United Fruit Company (UFCO). The Alajuela–Puerto Limón railroad not only created a banana economy in Costa Rica, but upon its completion in 1890 also greatly stimulated coffee exports to Europe and the United States.

The 1889 presidential election was another turning point in Costa Rica's political development. With a liberal incumbent president, conservative candidate José Joaquín Rodríguez Zeledón won the vote count, but his liberal opponent initially refused to concede defeat. After drawn-out negotiations, Rodríguez was allowed to take office six months after the election. This tense but peaceful surrender of power to the opposition party marked an advanced degree of maturity for Costa Rica's political system—a stage not reached in most Latin American countries until much later.

By 1930, Costa Rica had not only achieved stable and effective governance, but had also laid the groundwork for becoming one of Latin America's most enduring and stable democracies. The last successful military coup in Costa Rican history, led by Colonel Federico Tinoco and his brother José Joaquín Tinoco, occurred in 1917; the regime they established lasted less than two years. Workers and middle-class people began to organize politically in the 1920s, founding reformist parties and several unions, and the Liga Feminista (Feminist League) promoted women's suffrage. By 1930, Costa Rica had established ministries of labor and public health. And, reflecting judicious investment in public education from the mid-nineteenth century on, the country's literacy rate had risen from 11 percent in 1864, to 31 percent in 1892, to 76 percent in 1927. This educated population was important to the country's further evolution toward democracy.

Brazil offers another example of a country governed by an elected oligarchy during the era of the export economies. Unlike most of Spanish America, Brazil had made a relatively smooth transition from colony to independent country, mostly by virtue of continuity of rule by the Portuguese–Brazilian Braganza dynasty. The constitutional monarchy, with its constraints on royal power and an extremely limited franchise, functioned relatively smoothly under Emperor Dom Pedro II. But by the early 1870s, challenges to the status quo had arisen.

The 1864–1870 Paraguayan War (Chapter 3) expanded Brazil's military and heightened the officer corps's awareness of its interests. Officers joined with civilians to form the antimonarchy Republican Party in 1870. The rise of positivism in Brazil also weakened the monarchy, as the newly popular doctrine held that modernity must be embraced—and monarchy was an ancient, old-world institution. Following the 1888 Golden Law that abolished slavery, the momentum for political change peaked and the military, led by Marshal Deodoro da Fonseca, carried out a peaceful coup in 1889 that sent Emperor Pedro II and the royal family into exile in Portugal. A new constitution, adopted in 1891 and closely modeled on the U.S. document, created a federal republic of twenty states and a federal district in Rio de Janeiro, the capital. The president was to be elected directly, but elite political control was assured by the restriction of voting rights to literate males; fewer than 3.5 percent of Brazilians voted in presidential elections before 1930. Thus, the transition from empire to republic brought relatively little real change to Brazil.

The abolition of slavery and the continued ascendancy of coffee in the economy increased opportunities for Brazil to attract European immigration. Coffee production was labor intensive, and immigrants were able to earn a decent living by contracting with landowners to tend a certain number of trees. As in the other larger Latin American countries, the export economy created industry that supplied the country with light consumer goods: The thirteen thousand factories that existed in the state of São Paulo alone by 1920 provided additional employment for European immigrants, some four million of whom arrived in Brazil between 1877 and 1930, primarily from Italy and Portugal with smaller numbers from throughout Europe. Beginning in 1908, Brazil attracted substantial Japanese immigration, giving the country Latin America's largest Asian population. Most immigrants went to São Paulo and other coffee and industrial states of the center and south. While the total number of immigrants rivaled that of Argentina, Brazil's pre-immigration population base was much larger than Argentina's, and thus the foreign-born percentage of Brazil's population fell far short of Argentina's and, for that matter, that of the United States.

The rise of coffee and manufacturing accelerated the shift of wealth and power from the traditional northeast to the dynamic central and southern states. In the strongly federal system, state governors wielded great power; those of São Paulo and Minas Gerais wielded the most, and they often determined the outcome of presidential elections. Potent political machines developed in the states, particularly the poorer rural ones. In a system known as *coronelismo*, the bosses—called *coroneis* (colonels) because of a vague connection to colonial militias—delivered votes in exchange for financial and political benefits.

By the 1920s, the republic came under attack from both civilian dissidents and junior military officers. The dynamic coffee and industrial economy had created both a middle and a new working class whose growing demands for political representation and favorable policies were thwarted. The main complaint driving both civilian and military groups was that the republic was an empty shell in which voting

restrictions, fraud, and the federal structure gave the backward rural states the ability to check progressive policies advocated by the wealthier developing regions. *Paulistas*, or residents of São Paulo state, began thinking of Brazil in railroad terms, as a locomotive (São Paulo) pulling twenty empty boxcars (the other nineteen states and the federal district), and they saw no remedy for that within the republic's institutional structure. In addition to these grievances, military officers had professional reasons for discontent within an institution they considered backward and elitist. These concerns spawned revolts in 1922 and in 1924, the beginning of the bizarre phenomenon of the "Prestes Column." Army Captain Luís Carlos Prestes, who would become a leader of Brazil's Communist Party, sought unsuccessfully to provoke a broad-based uprising against the regime by leading a three-year, one-thousand-man, fifteen-thousand-mile protest march through the Brazilian interior and into Paraguay and Bolivia.

Brazil Today Fact Box





Area: 3,287,957 square miles

Population: 204,259,812

Population growth rate: 0.77%

Urban population: 85.7%

Ethnic composition: white 47.7%, mulatto 43.1%, black 7.6%, Asian 1.1%, and indigenous 0.4%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 65%, Protestant 22%, other Christian 0.7%, and spiritist 2.2%

Life expectancy: 73.53 years

Literacy: 92.6%

Years of schooling (average): 15 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$15,600

Percentage of population living in poverty: 21.4%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 42.9% and lowest 0.8%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 1.47%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 53.4%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

The Great Depression finished off the “first republic,” as the regime founded in 1889 came to be known. Extreme dependence on coffee exports, the engine of Brazil’s development during the previous sixty years, became a disaster overnight as world market prices fell by two-thirds. The president, Washington Luís, refused to take financial steps that might have cushioned the blow and made an unpopular endorsement for his successor. Getúlio Vargas, the opponent of Luís’s candidate, lost the election but took power by military coup. The first republic was dead.

OTHER PATTERNS OF POLITICAL EVOLUTION: COLOMBIA AND PERU

Mexico, Venezuela, Costa Rica, and Brazil illustrate two basic patterns of achieving stable and effective, but not democratic, political institutions during the period of economic development brought on by integration into the world market. Most other countries emerged from their chronic postindependence instability and developed reasonably effective governments without following either the long-term dictatorship or the elected oligarchy pattern. Nor did they completely overcome the factors that interrupted or overthrew governments from time to time. Colombia and Peru provide examples of these incomplete transitions to stable and effective governance.

Colombia experienced the standard challenges facing the newly independent countries. Simón Bolívar established Gran Colombia, which encompassed the whole of the former viceroyalty of New Granada, at the Congress of Angostura in 1819. The subsequent decade brought instability, violence, and personal contests between the centralist President Bolívar and his rival, federalist Vice President Francisco de Paula Santander. In 1830, Gran Colombia succumbed to the centrifugal pull of regional identities established over the three colonial centuries and broke into Venezuela, Ecuador, and the Republic of New Granada, which changed its name to Colombia in 1863. Independent New Granada continued the earlier pattern of frequent constitutional change, military uprisings, violence, and civil wars between liberals and conservatives.

By the late nineteenth century, coffee and bananas had superseded the traditional exports of gold, tobacco, and chinchona bark (used to make quinine), and increased government revenue enhanced political stability and underpinned the long dominance of conservative Rafael Núñez (president 1880–1882 and 1884–1894). Núñez took and retained power through elections but ruled as a virtual dictator. His 1886 constitution strengthened presidential powers, centralized control in Bogotá, and—without going quite to the extreme of his contemporary and neighbor Gabriel García Moreno of Ecuador (Chapter 3)—returned to the Catholic Church much power that earlier liberals had stripped from it. The Catholic restoration was formalized in an 1887 concordat.

The period of conservative rule that continued after Núñez led to a liberal rebellion known as the War of the Thousand Days (1899–1902). The conservative



Rafael Núñez

Source: Library of Congress

government sent its army and guerrilla supporters against liberal irregulars in a bloody conflict that would eventually cost one hundred thousand lives due to combat and disease; this conflict set precedents for further institutionalized liberal-conservative war that peaked between the 1940s and 1960s in a conflict known simply as “La Violencia.” The conservatives’ victory in the War of the Thousand Days contributed to the independence of Panama, which harbored strong liberal sympathies and proved receptive to U.S. overtures to support its break with Colombia and host a transoceanic canal (Chapter 6).

Conservative political dominance continued to 1930, but not without outbursts of instability and violence and periods of authoritarian rule. General Rafael Reyes came to power in 1904, disbanded Congress the following year, and ruled as a virtual dictator until he resigned and left for Europe in 1909. As the fledgling working and middle classes began to organize, they were normally met with repression as in the notorious “banana massacre” of 1928. Led by the Revolutionary Socialist Party (the forerunner of the Colombian Communist Party), twenty-five thousand workers on UFCO’s Caribbean coast plantations went on strike for better wages and working conditions. The U.S. manager appealed to Colombian president Miguel Abadía Méndez to intervene, and the president sent troops who killed or wounded hundreds of strikers. The event became another black mark on the reputation of UFCO. But despite these and other incidents showing that Colombia had not completely overcome its early political history, the country moved gradually away from instability and authoritarianism and toward stable and effective governance in the early twentieth century.

Colombia Today Fact Box



Area: 439,736 square miles

Population: 46,736,728

Population growth rate: 1.04%

Urban population: 76.4%

Ethnic composition: mestizo and white 84.2%, Afro-Colombian 10.4%, and Amerindian 3.4%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 90% and other 10%

Life expectancy: 75.48 years

Literacy: 94.7%

Years of schooling (average): 14 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$13,800

Percentage of population living in poverty: 27.8%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 42% and lowest 1.1%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 3.2%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 52.4%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

Peru also experienced mixed results in its evolution toward political maturity. Like Colombia, it underwent periods of anarchy, dictatorship, and caudillo rule, starting with an average of one regime change per year between 1821 and 1845. In contrast to most other countries, Peru did not develop the standard liberal–conservative party division; rather, parties tended to be personalistic and unstable. Even the relatively long-lasting Civilista Party, founded in 1872 as the vehicle to serve elite interests, had little ideological underpinning.

From 1840 to 1870, Peru was the richest Latin American country in terms of governmental income by virtue of the exploitation of guano—nitrate-rich bird droppings found on the offshore Chincha islands that were prized in Europe as fertilizer. To dig and load the valuable substance, contractors imported over thirty thousand Chinese indentured workers who labored under slavery-like conditions. Despite the guano bounty, profligate government spending, corruption in the administration of guano contracts, and indiscriminate borrowing from European banks left the country financially vulnerable. In 1869, its government turned the debt over to the French banking house of Dreyfus in exchange for Dreyfus's monopoly of guano mining and exportation.

In addition to guano and the metals that awaited foreign investment to be extracted, Peru had valuable nitrate deposits in its southernmost province of Tarapacá, located in the extremely dry Atacama Desert adjacent to the nitrate-rich Bolivian province of Antofagasta. British and Chilean investors had begun to exploit nitrates for export in the 1870s, but when Bolivia raised taxes on Chilean operators in 1879, they refused to pay and Bolivian president Hilarión Daza attempted to seize Chilean assets. Chile deployed troops to the region and the Peruvian government, bound by a secret alliance with Bolivia, joined the fray that quickly became the War of the Pacific—only the second full-scale intra–Latin American war of the nineteenth century. The conflict was a disaster for Peru: After winning a series of naval battles, Chilean troops occupied Lima, forcing Peru to sign the 1883 Treaty of Ancón which surrendered Tarapacá to Chile. Bolivia lost Antofagasta province and its outlet to the Pacific, and both countries lost the resource that would enrich victorious Chile for the next half-century.

The loss in the War of the Pacific was a deep wound to the country that had been the capital of all of Spanish South America, that had a much larger population

than Chile, and that expected victory over the upstart republic to its south. From the 1880s on, the dominant public discourse was, “What’s wrong with Peru?” Manuel González Prada, the first prominent intellectual to address the question, responded that Peru was not a nation but a country divided by difficult geography and especially by racial barriers between the dominant elites and the Indian majority in the Andes. The system of governance in the Andes, known as *gamonalismo*, involved total dominance by large estate owners (the *gamonales*) who used and abused the mostly Quechua Indians for their own profit and power. Because they were exploited, illiterate, ignorant, non-Spanish speaking, and isolated in their own enclaves, Indians marshaled for military duty against the Chileans did not even know that “Peru” existed. For González Prada, the Indian had to be redeemed before Peru could progress.

“We keep [the Indian] in ignorance and servitude, we debase him in the barracks, we brutalize him with alcohol, we send him to be destroyed in civil wars and from time to time we carry out massacres. . . . In the interior [the Andes] one sees the violation of all laws under a true feudal regime. There are found neither laws nor courts of justice, because the *hacendados* and *gamonales* . . . assume the roles of judges and enforcers of sentences.” (207)
 “Haciendas constitute kingdoms in the heart of the Republic, hacendados exercise the role of autocrats. . . . In many towns of the interior there is not a single man capable of reading or writing. During the War of the Pacific, the Indians viewed the struggle between the two nations as a civil war between General Chile and General Peru.” (211)

Source: Manuel González Prada, *Horas de lucha* (Lima, Peru: Fondo de Cultura Popular, 1904), from the section titled “Our Indians,” 199–213 (author’s translation).

Adding to Peru’s pain and humiliation was the 1889 Grace Contract. After guano reserves had been exhausted and the nitrates of Tarapacá lost, Peru had no way to service its debt. The solution was the Grace Contract, which delivered the country’s existing and future railroads to a British consortium (the Peruvian Corporation) for sixty-six years in exchange for assuming the huge debt. Giving away the railroads, a symbol of modernity just beginning to penetrate the Andes, was viewed by many Peruvians as an unscrupulous, antipatriotic bargain. Although the contract may have given Peru the best terms available, that was not the popular perception: The elite-dominated governments began to be seen as *vendepatria* (sellers-out of the fatherland), a view that would harden in coming decades and fuel strong nationalist sentiments well into the twentieth century.

Military coups and instability returned after the War of the Pacific. Military men dominated between 1885 and 1895, when Nicolás de Piérola, who had been

de facto president during part of the war, returned to power via a popular uprising. The Civilista Party gained power at the turn of the century, but it developed a reformist wing that contributed to instability, then to authoritarianism. Guillermo Billinghurst was elected president in 1912 and overthrown by the military in 1914. Augusto B. Leguía was elected in 1919 and retained power for eleven years. He heavy-handedly subdued opponents in Congress, ruled as a virtual dictator, and was reelected twice through rigged ballots before being removed by the military when the Great Depression struck in 1930. Peru, then, had come a long way from the annual turnovers in government during its first twenty-four years, but instability and authoritarianism survived into the early twentieth century.

NEW GROUPS, NEW CHALLENGES

The Latin American elites' status and power reached their pinnacle during the era of the export economies. The very wealthy lived in luxury, ran their countries either directly or through friendly dictators, and exuded an air of assurance that their European counterparts could only envy. The ranks of the creole and *mazombo* elites had been expanded and strengthened by financially successful immigrants from around Europe whose non-Hispanic surnames added variety to the newspapers' society pages. Following a visit to Chile in 1909, a U.S. political scientist, Paul Reinsch, published an article in the *American Political Science Review* describing the country's elites as "an aristocracy of birth and wealth [that] . . . still has full and acknowledged control of the economic, political and social forces of the state in which they live."¹ He could have described many other Latin American countries in similar terms.

Professor Reinsch's visit was evidently orchestrated by some of the country's most wealthy and powerful, for had he strayed beyond the Club de la Unión, the ornate halls of Congress, and the sumptuous parlors and country estates of the oligarchy, he would have seen a country undergoing rapid change. As late as the 1860s, Chile and the rest of Latin America still preserved the social structure inherited from the colonial period. This consisted of a tiny, mostly white minority of elites, a poor mass of people of mixed race, and in some countries sizeable Indian populations that in Guatemala and the Andean region constituted a majority. Brazil, the Caribbean islands, and parts of the mainland republics were home to large numbers of African-descended people, either slave or free. There was almost no middle class below the elites, and no modern working class, or proletariat, of the type found in industrial societies.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the colonial social order had changed, particularly in the larger and more developed countries. The economic expansion and modernization generated by the export economies brought about the development of more articulated class distinctions. Heightened and diversified economic activity stimulated import/export, wholesale, and retail commerce and financed the growth of public education and government bureaucracies. Employment in these sectors required some education and was considered white collar rather than manual

labor—in other words, middle-class jobs. As economic expansion continued, clerks in commercial establishments and banks, accountants, bureaucrats, teachers, foremen, military officers, and small-business owners came to constitute a fledgling middle class that developed a consciousness of its distinction from both the elites above and the masses beneath their status.

Meanwhile, the building and operating of railroads and work in mines, in processing plants, on the docks, in construction, on banana and sugar plantations, and in a variety of new urban occupations produced another new social class: the proletariat. In addition, the factories that grew up in the larger South American countries and Mexico to provide for local needs—processed foods, tobacco products, textiles, beer, furniture, glass, iron, cement, and other goods—augmented the new working class.

Women were important actors in the emerging social groups. As the export economies drove the growth of urban occupations, women became wage laborers in both the white- and blue-collar sectors. Lower class women had worked outside the home since colonial days as domestic servants, laundresses, market vendors, and in other varied activities. By the turn of the century, women had become important components of the factory labor force, particularly in the manufacture of textiles, garments, and tobacco products. In 1912, over 70 percent of workers in São Paulo's booming textile factories were women, and still more wove and sewed at home. In the 1910s, women constituted 26 percent of all factory workers in Chile and 18 percent of those in Buenos Aires. Women's integration into the blue-collar labor force was not always smooth. For males in general, factory labor and the independence it entailed clashed with the ideal of protected womanhood and the male role as provider; and their male fellow workers feared that the lower wages that women earned might bring down their own pay.

The advance of public education offered opportunities for women to enter the middle class through white-collar employment. By the 1870s, public education through high school, while reaching only a fraction of the Latin American population, had been established in national and many state or provincial capitals. In 1873, nearly a third of Brazil's enrolled students were female. In Argentina, President Domingo F. Sarmiento (1868–1874) (the gaucho-hater of Chapter 3), a friend of U.S. public education pioneers Horace and Mary Mann, established normal schools for women as well as men; by the 1890s, technical schools for both sexes had appeared. Women, thus, were prepared to fill white-collar jobs as teachers, nurses, clerks in government and private sector offices, and salespersons in shops and the new department stores. They constituted a majority of teachers in Argentina and Chile in the 1910s, and women had begun to break into the medical and legal professions in miniscule numbers. But they were still disenfranchised and denied full citizenship.

By the time of Professor Reinsch's visit, in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Mexico, and a few other countries, the middle and working classes created by the export economies had begun to make their voices heard. Workers had begun to organize unions, which in their early days were usually illegal, and used the strike, always



Women making cigarettes in Mexico City factory, 1903

Source: Library of Congress

at great peril, to defend their interests and try to improve pay and working conditions. Strikes were normally put down by force, often leading to massacres of great proportions. Males of both the working and middle classes in some countries formed political parties to represent their interests; after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution brought the Communist Party to power in Russia, some Latin American workers' parties transformed themselves into domestic Communist or Socialist parties. And despite Reinsch's observations to the contrary, by the turn of the twentieth century, these new organizations—labor unions and middle-class and workers' parties—had actually begun to contest the elites' monopoly of political power.

Chile provides an excellent example of the development of the new social classes, their challenge to the elites, and the elites' response. We focus on the proletariat, as

the Chilean working class became one of the largest (as a share of total population) and most combative in Latin America. Without the militance and persistence of this working class, Chile would not have been the only country, not only in Latin America but also in the world, to select an orthodox Marxist president through a free and fair election: Salvador Allende, president 1970–1973 (Chapter 10).

While the bulk of Chile's working class grew out of the manual labor occupations described above, the most radical part of it developed in the heart of the export economy: the nitrate mines of the northern desert that Chile wrested from Peru and Bolivia in the War of the Pacific. Chilean control of the nitrate zone brought increased investment, primarily British and Chilean, and a need for labor in the almost unpopulated area. Nitrate workers were recruited by the thousands, largely from among laborers on the large landed estates of Chile's Central Valley, and lured to the arid north by promises of fantastically high wages. From fewer than three thousand nitrate workers in 1880, the ranks swelled to fifty-three thousand in 1913 and peaked at sixty-one thousand in 1925.

Conditions in the nitrate zone proved ideal for creating a militant proletariat. The promised wages were eaten up by the high cost of living, as everything had to be shipped from great distances and the mining companies' stores monopolized sales. Working conditions were hard and dangerous, and the transition from agricultural to regimented industrial-style labor was jarring. Workers lived together in barracks, without their families who remained behind, and were isolated from outside contact in the sprawling desert. For those working in British-owned mining operations, where the best positions, quarters, and supplies were reserved for the foreigners, being supervised by British managers gave workers a taste of "eyeball-to-eyeball" imperialism—the humiliation of being considered and treated as an inferior by foreigners in one's own country. The arrival in the nitrate zone of labor organizers, including socialists and anarchists, completed the recipe for radicalization.

Unions began to appear in the 1880s. Most of the original ones were simple mutual aid societies, but in the coming decades more of them were Marxist or anarcho-syndicalist. They began to strike against their working conditions and, in the cases of the more radical unions, against capitalism itself. After the first recorded strike in 1887, by the early 1900s, workers were carrying out major strikes, and the companies and the Chilean government were responding vigorously. Among the larger nitrate strikes were one in the port city of Antofagasta in 1906, in which over one hundred strikers were killed or injured, and another the following year in Iquique, where soldiers killed or wounded up to two thousand workers. Beyond the nitrate zone, the cities of Valparaíso and Santiago witnessed numerous strikes. In 1905, crowds protesting the high price of meat, caused in their view by a tariff on Argentine cattle, took over Santiago for a couple of days before troops arrived to restore order. The first national labor organization, the Chilean Workers' Federation, was founded in 1909.

The Radical Party, established in 1863 to oppose the dominant conservatives, had become a vehicle of the middle classes and was well represented in Congress by

1900. The Democratic Party, dating from 1887, was the electoral voice of the working class. It stood for the “political, economic, and social liberation of the people” and elected its first representative to Congress in 1894.² Its left wing split off in 1912 as the Socialist Workers’ Party, which subsequently became the Communist Party in 1922. Thus by the early 1920s, both middle- and working-class interests, while remaining a distinct minority in Congress, had obtained political representation and a modicum of political influence.

Faced with unions, strikes, political parties challenging their dominance, and the spread of squalid urban *conventillos* (the tenements housing workers and other migrants from the countryside), the elites began debating how to deal with “the social question.” Despite the evidence, some denied the existence of a problem. Conservative Congressman Eulogio Díaz Sagredo, for example, opined: “In truth it cannot be said that the worker problem or question which is the cause of so much worry in Europe has developed here.” In his book on the social question, Javier Díaz Lira laid the blame for the misery of the lower classes on “the enormous development of their vices.” Conservative Congressman Juan Enrique Concha declared the answer to be “social stewardship”: The wealthy should get to know the poor by visiting their workplaces and tenements to “make them see the absurdity of socialist utopias, and disabuse them of the false idea of economic equality by showing them there is a providential order which they must respect.” He further argued that the social question was not an economic matter, but “fundamentally a psychological, moral, and religious question, whose solution will be found, the world willing, only in the teaching of Christ.”³ While engaging in this sterile debate, Congress appointed commissions to investigate the social question and university students produced numerous theses on the issue, but those in power took no significant action to address what would soon become an urgent problem.

THE ECLIPSE OF OLIGARCHIC DOMINANCE: URUGUAY, ARGENTINA, AND CHILE

Toward the end of the era of the export economies, political change had again begun to transform Latin America. In a few countries, the challenges to elite rule that Chile faced after 1900 resulted in the enlargement of political systems to include, at least partially, the middle and working classes. Mexico was the first Latin American country in which an oligarchy lost its monopoly of power (Chapter 7). Uruguay was the second.

Uruguay’s export economy, like Argentina’s, was rural based. Its exports of wool, meat, and hides provided a modest prosperity, and light industry developed in the capital, Montevideo. Also as in Argentina, Uruguay’s scant population was overwhelmed by European immigrants, who pushed the total population to one million by 1900. Among this million were members of the new working and middle classes.

By the late nineteenth century, an oligarchy had emerged in Uruguay out of the early postindependence instability, civil wars, and caudillo rule. Two parties, the

Blancos and the Colorados (whites and reds, but not the red associated with Communists), had developed—the Colorados being the stronger. Settled oligarchic rule began with four military presidents between 1876 and 1890, followed by civilians from 1890 to 1903. Then appeared José Batlle y Ordóñez.

Batlle y Ordóñez was the dominant political figure of Uruguay from his first presidency (1903–1907), through his second (1911–1915), to his death in 1929. He was a journalist who expounded advanced ideas and came up through the ranks of the Colorado party, serving in both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. Rather than breaking with his party, a pillar of the oligarchy, Batlle y Ordóñez worked within it to create a strong faction receptive to his progressive ideas. Astute maneuvering got the Congress, which in Uruguay elected the chief executive, to name him president in 1903.

Batlle y Ordóñez was a committed reformer who incorporated the middle and working classes into the political process, creating a modern welfare state. The changes he wrought made Uruguay by far the most socially and politically progressive country in South America, without the cataclysmic revolution that transformed Mexico after 1910. His accomplishments over two presidential terms included extending state participation in the economy, in areas such as banking, insurance, and electricity; free universal education; the eight-hour day for workers; retirement and



José Batlle y Ordóñez

Source: Library of Congress

old-age pensions; no-fault divorce; abolition of capital punishment; and separation of church and state. Although he wielded great authority as president, he feared the potential for abuse of power. Therefore, in 1918, he engineered the establishment of a collegiate executive, in which the president shared power with a nine-member National Council of Administration—a system similar to the Swiss form of plural executive. For this reason, along with its prosperity and advanced social legislation, post-oligarchic Uruguay was often referred to as the Switzerland of South America.

In Argentina, an oligarchy began to consolidate its control from the time of Bartolomé Mitre's presidency (1862–1868). It established and retained control on the basis of voting restrictions, fraud, and the results it achieved: the spectacular economic development resulting from Argentina's integration into the world market. The growing percentage of foreign-born, non-citizens in Argentina's population, moreover, helped to keep the voting rolls lean. The oligarchy coalesced around the National Autonomist Party, founded in 1874 as a fusion of two parties representing the elites, and all presidents through 1916 came from its ranks.

As the economy developed, it greatly expanded both the middle and working classes. The Unión Cívica Radical, or Radical Party, was founded in 1890 to represent the middle class, while the Socialist Party, established six years later, aspired to represent the workers. The Radicals critiqued the oligarchy for its use of fraud and exclusion of most Argentines from political participation. Following its motto, "relentless struggle," the Radical Party first tried rebellion against the system, failing in three attempts between 1893 and 1905. Thereafter, it turned to aggressive organizing, to the point that it became a mass-based party that threatened the oligarchy's ability to retain direct power. Meanwhile, labor unions and strikes proliferated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among the disenfranchised workers, signaling another danger for elite interests.

By the early twentieth century, leaders of the National Autonomist Party became convinced that change was inevitable and that they should shape its course. Thus, in 1912, they enacted an electoral reform, the Sáenz Peña Law—named for the current president. The law established universal male suffrage for Argentine citizens, compulsory voting, and the secret ballot. As the naturalization process was slow and difficult, many foreign-born workers, including those who espoused radical ideas that the elites found dangerous, were not enfranchised, while the bulk of the middle class became voters. Hipólito Yrigoyen of the Radical Party was elected president in 1916, and Radicals held the presidency until a military coup in 1930. Thus following a different course than in Uruguay, the Argentine oligarchy also lost control of politics while retaining much influence.

In Chile, the oligarchy was forced to surrender its monopoly of political power in the face of radicalized working and middle classes. The First World War disrupted trade patterns within the global market, causing crises in most Latin American countries. Chile's nitrate export economy was seriously affected, while prices of imported goods rose; the result was a dual crisis of unemployment and inflation. Focusing on food price inflation as a rallying point, labor and student leaders in 1918 formed the

Workers' Assembly of National Nutrition. This potent protest movement adopted a fifty-point program of social and political demands and mobilized hundreds of thousands of people throughout the country.

Against the backdrop of continuing economic crisis and political mobilization, the 1920 presidential election split the oligarchy into two factions: those opposed to making concessions to the protesters and those, led by veteran politician Arturo Alessandri Palma, who were willing to implement preemptive reforms to defuse the crisis. Alessandri's narrow victory did not resolve matters; rather, it deepened the political instability that would characterize Chile in the 1920s and 1930s as the country adjusted to mass politics. Intransigents still controlled Congress, blocking Alessandri's proposed social legislation, while the protesters continued to demonstrate and strike. The impasse was resolved in 1924 by military intervention—a rare occurrence in Chile—which not only prompted the president's resignation but also forced Congress to enact reform legislation and adopt a new constitution. The 1925 constitution enhanced presidential authority, subordinated private property rights to the public good, and established the state's commitment to social welfare for the working and middle classes.

Continuing economic problems and political disarray opened the way for a career army officer, Carlos Ibáñez del Campo, to assume the presidency in 1927. During his four-year rule, he dominated Congress and launched the developmentalist and social welfare state that lasted in Chile until 1973. By the end of the era of the export economies in 1930, then, Chile was in flux, but it was clear that the oligarchy that had ruled for a century had lost its monopoly of power and control of the state.

The new political order that emerged during the era of the export economies included long-term dictatorships, elected oligarchic regimes, and political systems that had matured but not achieved full stability. Regardless of their configuration, these governments relied on professionalized armies which, aided by railroads and the telegraph, ended the age of caudillos in most countries. While the rich got richer from the bounty of exports, the colonial social order gave way to a more complex one featuring new working and middle classes and women entering the modern workplace. In a handful of countries, the working and middle classes gained sufficient influence to end the oligarchies' monopoly of political power. By 1930, along with its economy, Latin America's political and social landscape had undergone significant transformation.

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NOTES

1. Paul S. Reinsch, "Parliamentary Government in Chile," *American Political Science Review* 3, no. 4 (1909): 508.
2. Brian Loveman, *Chile: The Legacy of Hispanic Capitalism*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 163.
3. James Oliver Morris, *Elites, Intellectuals, and Consensus: A Study of the Social Question and the Industrial Relations System in Chile* (Ithaca: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1966), in order 177, 129–130, 126, 123.

6

Rise of the Yankee

Latin America and the United States have a lengthy history of coexistence in the same hemisphere. This history has been marked by friendly relations and cooperation and also by misunderstanding and conflict. Latin Americans tend to believe that the United States takes them for granted except in times of immediate threats to its economic or geopolitical interests and that U.S. foreign policy is focused on other parts of the globe. Latin Americans also feel that, despite being neighbors, North Americans embrace stereotypes of them, some quite unflattering, rather than making the effort to get to know them. They resent the role that the United States has assumed, from early in our republican life, of policeman of the hemisphere. And one occasionally hears the complaint that the people of the United States have appropriated for themselves the name that applies to the entire hemisphere: America. This was noted as early as the 1860s by Eduarda Mansilla de García, the wife of an Argentine diplomat posted to Washington, DC, who wrote: “the race that calls itself ‘American’ . . . does not allow that we, the Latin people, who have built our world also in this hemisphere, call ourselves [anything] but Hispanic American.”¹

PRELUDE TO EMPIRE

Prior to the independence of the United States and Latin America, relations between British and Iberian colonies were virtually nonexistent. Colonial British merchant shippers joined Europeans in breaking the trade monopoly that Spain and Portugal attempted to enforce on their colonies, but given the prohibition on non-Catholics entering Iberian territory—a prohibition enforced by the Inquisition—contact was limited largely to points where the contraband could be safely unloaded. The 1803 Louisiana Purchase created a long and ill-defined border between the United States

and Spanish Mexico; this territorial acquisition had no immediate impact on relations but set the stage for conflict with soon-to-be independent Mexico. With the fall of the Spanish monarchy and the transfer of the Portuguese court to Brazil, Yankee traders took advantage of *de facto* free trade to increase their presence in the area, not only supplying merchandise but in many cases touting the virtues of independence by distributing copies of the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution. U.S. citizens participated in the independence wars primarily by supplying weaponry and provisions to the independence armies, while a small number volunteered for military service, as in Francisco de Miranda's ill-fated 1806 invasion of Venezuela (Chapter 2).

Even before the Latin American independence movements had concluded, the young United States began to project its influence across the region by proclaiming the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. President James Monroe and the Congress became concerned when a group of European monarchies, the "Holy Alliance," signaled that they might aid Spain to retake its former colonies that had achieved independence. Monroe wrote: "The American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers." He went further, asserting that "the political system of the allied powers is essentially different . . . from that of America. . . . We owe it, therefore, to candor, and to the amicable relations existing between the United States and those powers [the Holy Alliance] to declare that we shall consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety."²

"The political system of the allied powers" to which Monroe referred was monarchy; the United States was taking a stand for the innovative republican form of governance that it and most of independent Latin America had adopted. Having survived Britain's attempt to retake its former colonies in the War of 1812, the United States was offering to protect the fledgling Latin American countries from similar attacks on their fragile sovereignty. At the same time, the Monroe Doctrine clearly announced that the United States was creating a sphere of influence in which the northern republic would be the ultimate arbiter of territorial integrity and political alliances throughout the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine had little practical effect at the time of its issuance as the European monarchies soon quarreled among themselves and the Holy Alliance fell apart. Moreover, the United States initially lacked the military power to enforce its pronouncement, but British naval power dissuaded Europeans from attempting to recolonize and potentially close off British access to Latin American markets. The Monroe Doctrine would endure as the cornerstone of U.S. policy toward Latin America and undergo transformations to accommodate changing conditions.

Preventing Europe from acquiring territory in the Western Hemisphere was one premise of U.S. policy toward Latin America. The other was expansion into Latin America, in two forms: territorial and economic. Territorial expansion into Latin America, directed first at Mexico, was an outgrowth of the domestic westward

movement. As the United States spread westward from early in the nineteenth century, driving back the Indians, annexing their land, and creating new territories and states, a new doctrine arose to justify past and future territorial expansion: Manifest Destiny, a phrase coined by newspaperman John O'Sullivan who in 1845 proclaimed "the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government."³

The concept of Manifest Destiny involved not only divine right and the superiority of the U.S. form of government, but also the supposed superiority of the "Anglo-Saxon race." As conflict with Mexico loomed, clergyman Theodore Parker argued that war was unnecessary because the United States would prevail over the long run "by the steady advance of a superior race, with superior ideas and a better civilization . . . by being better than Mexico, wiser, humaner [*sic*], more free and manly."⁴ But supposed racial superiority also justified war: Sam Houston, the hero of Texas independence, said, "The Mexicans are no better than Indians, and I see no reason why we should not go on in the same course now and take their land."⁵

Under expansionist President James K. Polk, the United States in 1845 annexed Texas, which had fought a successful war for secession from Mexico in 1835-1836. This was a serious provocation to Mexico, whose government had not recognized the independence of its breakaway state. A boundary dispute provided the pretext for Polk to send troops into the contested area between the Nueces River and the Río Grande. Peace overtures soon collapsed and a military confrontation along the Río Grande offered the excuse Polk sought; at his urging, Congress declared war on May 13, 1846.

The war's outcome was predictable. U.S. general Zachary Taylor launched an invasion from the north, quickly capturing Monterrey; and General Winfield Scott attacked through the port of Veracruz, overrunning Mexico City on September 14, 1847. The ubiquitous Antonio López de Santa Anna (Chapter 3) turned up to lead the capital's defense, issuing a defiant challenge to the invaders: "My duty is to sacrifice myself, and I will know how to fulfill it! Perhaps the Americans may proudly tread the imperial capital of the Aztecs. I will never witness such disgrace, for I am decided to first die fighting!"⁶ Bravado quickly evaporated, and Santa Anna led the retreat before Scott's advancing forces. In sharp contrast to the caudillo, the heroes of Mexico City were six cadets who died defending the military school at Chapultepec Castle, thus becoming the *Niños Héroes* (boy heroes) still honored today. In the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico surrendered half its territory to the United States, receiving in turn fifteen million dollars. The United States gained the future states of California, Nevada, and Utah; most of Arizona; half of New Mexico; and smaller parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

The United States also became involved in Central America in the 1840s. British agents had demonstrated interest in building a canal across Central America, and a French company had mapped a canal route across Panama—Colombia's northernmost province. Fearing European intrusion, Colombian authorities turned to



General Winfield Scott entering Mexico City, 1847

Source: Library of Congress

the United States for the protection envisioned in the Monroe Doctrine. The 1846 Mallarino–Bidlack Treaty gave the United States permanent transit rights across the isthmus in exchange for a U.S. guarantee of Colombian sovereignty over Panama.

The 1849 California Gold Rush heightened U.S. interest in Central America. Given the hardships and dangers of the overland trek from the East or Midwest and the longer trip around the tip of South America, which benefited the Chilean economy (Chapter 3), the slender neck of Central America offered promising prospects for a better route to the gold fields. Future prospectors first crossed by boat, mule, and foot, but the age-old dream of an interoceanic canal quickly resurfaced and Nicaragua was initially favored as the site. Considerably wider than the narrowest potential crossing in Panama, the Nicaragua route was considered more viable owing to the San Juan River connecting the Caribbean with Lake Nicaragua—a water route that would leave only the relatively short distance from the lake to the Pacific to be excavated. In 1849, the Nicaraguan government gave U.S. entrepreneur Cornelius Vanderbilt and his associates a concession to construct a canal along that route, but Costa Rica claimed co-ownership of the mouth of the San Juan River, and Britain supported the Costa Ricans. Rather than push the rival claims to the point of conflict, the United States and Britain signed the Clayton–Bulwer Treaty in 1850, committing both sides to cooperate on any future Central American canal. Obtaining British consent to effective parity in Central America represented a major step forward in the United States’ claim to power in the Caribbean Basin.

Abandoning the canal idea, U.S. entrepreneurs pursued two approaches to transporting 49ers across Central America. Vanderbilt formed the Accessory Transit Company, which offered steamship service from New York to Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, passage on smaller steamers up the San Juan River and across Lake Nicaragua, stagecoaches to the Pacific coast, and steamships on to San Francisco. Other U.S. investors took advantage of the newly acquired transit rights across Panama, building the Panama Railroad between 1850 and 1855. Upon its completion, the railroad became the preferred conveyance. Although opened after the California Gold Rush had peaked, the forty-seven-mile Panama Railroad (the world's first transoceanic railway) carried enough passengers and freight to be profitable for several decades. This was the first major U.S. investment in Central America, and with it came increased oversight.

Another manifestation of U.S. expansionist tendencies was the rise of filibustering. Rather than today's definition of filibustering—talking at length in the U.S. Senate to block votes on legislation opposed by the speaker(s)—nineteenth-century filibustering involved unauthorized private military expeditions that set off from the United States, usually to attempt to take and hold territory in Mexico, Central America, Cuba, and even South America. Although such conquering expeditions violated the 1818 Neutrality Act, U.S. governments normally took a laissez-faire attitude toward them.

Filibustering peaked in the 1850s, and the most successful of the expeditions, despite its ultimate failure, was that led by Tennessee native William Walker to Nicaragua. A veteran of filibustering in northern Mexico, Walker went to Nicaragua at the invitation of the Liberal Party which was engaged in conflict with the rival Conservatives. Walker set off from San Francisco with fifty-seven men in May 1855, defeated the Conservatives, was named commander of the Nicaraguan army, and by November had become de facto ruler of the country through a figurehead president. In July 1856, the indomitable Walker had himself elevated to president through a rigged election, following which he reestablished slavery in the country and made English the official language. However, invasions by other Central American countries, opposition from Britain and Cornelius Vanderbilt, and internal strife ended his bizarre Nicaraguan adventure in May 1857. Indicative of the lax attitude of U.S. administrations toward such patently imperialist schemes, Walker led another invasion in 1860; this time to Honduras, where he was captured and executed. Walker's and the numerous other filibustering ventures stirred potent anti-U.S. sentiments wherever they took place.

In 1869 and 1870, the United States was poised to acquire additional Latin American territory. U.S. secretary of state William H. Seward expressed interest in the Dominican Republic as early as 1865, when he noted the desirability of having a naval base on Samaná Bay. The Dominican Republic's history as an independent republic had been chaotic (Chapter 3) and included recolonization by Spain between 1861 and 1865, when the Civil War prevented the United States from enforcing the Monroe Doctrine. Given its vulnerability to invasion from Haiti and the territorial

Dominican Republic Today Fact Box



Area: 18,792 square miles
Population: 10,478,756
Population growth rate: 1.23%
Urban population: 79%
Ethnic composition: mixed 73%, white 16%, and black 11%
Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 95% and other 5%
Life expectancy: 77.97 years
Literacy: 91.8%
Years of schooling (average): 13 years
GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$15,000
Percentage of population living in poverty: 41.1%
Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 37.4% and lowest 1.9%
Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 0.61%
Internet users (percentage of total population): 48.2%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).
Note: GDP, gross domestic product

designs of various European countries, many Dominicans doubted their country's viability as an independent nation and supported annexation. Following a rigged referendum in the Dominican Republic that approved annexation, President Ulysses S. Grant had a treaty drafted and sent to the U.S. Senate, where the old racial arguments resurfaced, now in opposition to expansion. Senator Charles Sumner proclaimed that "Santo Domingo, situated in tropical waters and occupied by another race, can never become a permanent possession of the United States." To Senator Carl Schurz, Dominicans were disqualified from joining the United States because they were "people of the Latin race mixed with Indian and African blood."⁷ The June 1870 Senate vote resulted in a tie, falling short of the two-thirds needed to ratify and ending the prospect of annexation.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF EMPIRE

As the United States recovered from the Civil War, its manufacturers, exporters, and bankers focused increasingly on the potentially lucrative opportunities offered by Latin America. While Britain remained the primary trader, investor, and lender in the region, U.S. interests began to press their case. Some Latin Americans likewise saw an advantage in dealing with a rival of the dominant British. Thus when the United States called for a conference to be held in Washington, D.C., in 1889, all but one of the Latin American states attended. Their representatives turned down a

U.S. proposal for a customs union, and resolutions adopted on nonintervention and compulsory arbitration of international disputes proved meaningless. The important accomplishment was the establishment of the first framework for inter-American cooperation: the International Union of American Republics and its Commercial Bureau of the American Republics—forerunners of the Pan American Union (1910) and the Organization of American States (1948).

Cuba, meanwhile, had been in the sights of U.S. expansionists since the early days of the republic. With its dynamic sugar export economy, Cuba was Spain's richest remaining colony and a major source of income to Spanish merchants, investors, and the crown. Cuba's proximity—ninety miles from Key West, Florida—was an attraction, and the continuation of slavery there made taking Cuba especially appealing to the slave states of the U.S. South. Discussion of the future annexation of Cuba was so commonplace that a sense of inevitability developed. As early as 1823, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams proclaimed: "there are laws of political as well as physical gravitation: and if an apple severed by the tempest from its native tree cannot choose but to fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its own unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only towards the North American Union, which by the same law of nature cannot cast her off from her bosom."⁸

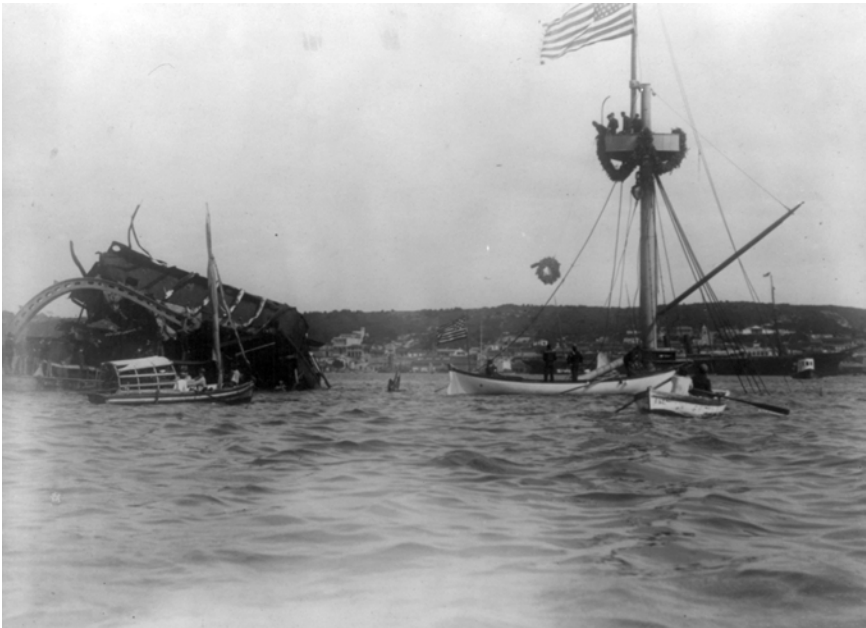
Interest in Cuba continued over the decades, but action was delayed for several reasons. The anticipated rebellion for Cuban independence failed to materialize until the late 1860s. Meanwhile, the United States was focused on westward expansion within its own territory and into Mexico. With passage across Central America the next major hemispheric focus, Cuba remained in limbo—but not for long. The 1854 Ostend Manifesto clearly demonstrated that interest in Cuba remained strong.

The Ostend Manifesto is an interesting footnote in the history of U.S. expansionism. President Franklin Pierce ordered the U.S. minister to Madrid to offer 130 million U.S. dollars for the island—not the first such offer the United States had made—and if rebuffed, to take steps toward Cuba's forcible separation from Spain. Pierce then directed his ministers in London and Paris to meet with the minister to Madrid, which they did in Ostend, Belgium, where they drafted a dispatch that constituted an ultimatum. Reflecting the prevailing racial attitudes and attempting to justify their position, the ministers expressed fear of a slave revolt in Cuba that could spread to the United States, with "all its attendant horrors to the white race." The United States should continue to try to purchase Cuba, they said, but should use force if Spain continued to stall: "By every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain if we possess the power."⁹ But by the time of the Ostend Manifesto, acquisition of Cuba had fallen victim to the pre-Civil War sectional struggle, as northern states opposed the addition of any new slave-holding territory. The failure of Cuba's Ten Years' War for independence (1868–1878) further postponed the day of reckoning.

That day finally arrived in 1898, during the second Cuban war of independence which had begun in 1895 under the leadership of José Martí. By this time,

U.S. interests had invested heavily in Cuban sugar plantations and other enterprises, and continuation of the war threatened to damage these investments. Egged on by the sensationalist press, which reported daily on the brutal methods the Spanish army used to quell the rebellion, and by public opinion that responded to the drum beat of war, President William McKinley hesitated until an explosion on the battleship *Maine* in Havana harbor killed over 250 U.S. service personnel on February 15, 1898. Congress declared war on Spain at McKinley's urging on April 25. Commodore George Dewey decimated the Spanish fleet based in Spain's major Asian colony, the Philippines, and Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt led his "rough riders" in their famous charge up San Juan Hill near Santiago. The "splendid little war," as Secretary of State John Hay called it, was over in less than three months. The Treaty of Paris, signed in December 1898, established Cuba's independence, gave Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States, and authorized the sale of the Philippines to the United States for twenty million U.S. dollars. Now possessing islands in both the Atlantic and the Pacific, the United States became a global power overnight.

The outcome of U.S. intervention in their independence war confirmed what many Cubans feared: Independence from Spain did not mean an independent Cuban nation. Although pledged to granting Cuba independence by the April 1898 Teller Amendment, the United States could not resist conditioning the withdrawal of its troops on Cuba's adoption of a constitutional provision that made the island a



Sinking of the Maine in Havana harbor

Source: Library of Congress

formal protectorate. The Platt Amendment, named for the Connecticut senator who proposed it, was incorporated under direct U.S. pressure into the first Cuban constitution, adopted in 1901. It denied Cuba the essence of nationhood—sovereignty—by granting the U.S. government “the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence [and] the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty.”¹⁰ Who would determine whether Cuban independence was threatened and the government was competent to meet its assigned tasks? The U.S. government held that authority, and would use it often.

The Platt Amendment was not the only humiliation suffered by Cuban patriots. Cuba was forced to grant the United States a permanent lease on Guantánamo Bay as a coaling station—an agreement that amounted to annexation. The Platt Amendment and the Guantánamo lease were bitter pills to swallow for patriots who had fought two wars for genuine independence and who were on the verge of victory when the United States intervened. One result of U.S. tutelage during the three-plus decades of the “Platt Amendment Republic,” wrote Cuban intellectual Jorge Mañach, was “general civic indolence, a tepid indifference to national dangers.”¹¹ Another was a persistent, deep-seated hostility to the United States that would aid Fidel Castro to take power and carry out a revolution that erased the very presence of the United States on the island, except for Guantánamo.

Owning Puerto Rico and exercising close supervision over the largest and richest island in the Caribbean, the United States became even more focused on the region at the turn of the twentieth century, and attention turned back to a transoceanic canal. With its territory spanning the Pacific, including Hawaii beginning in 1898, the United States proved receptive to the notion of a “two ocean navy” popularized by Navy Admiral and author Alfred Thayer Mahan; a Central American canal thus would serve military as well as commercial purposes. Nicaragua had granted a concession to a U.S. company that collapsed in the 1893 financial panic without having turned a spade of earth. Meanwhile, in 1878, Colombia had contracted with a French consortium led by Ferdinand de Lesseps, builder of the Suez Canal in Egypt, to dig a canal through its province of Panama. However, after making substantial progress, the French operation also succumbed to the 1893 financial panic.

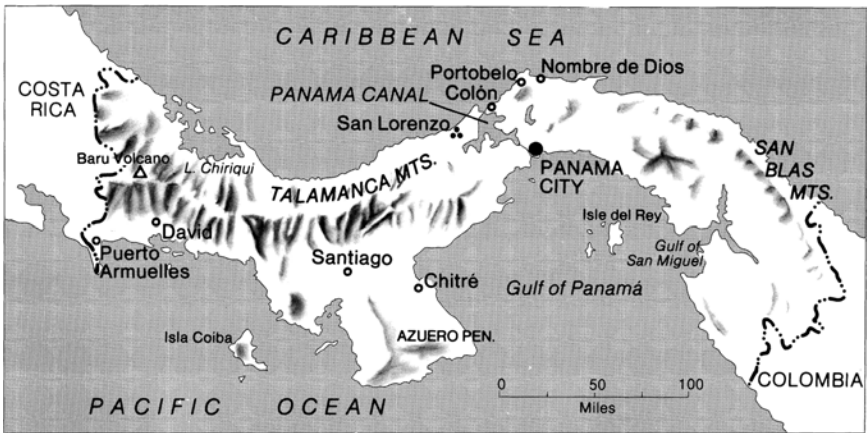
When expansionist Theodore Roosevelt assumed the presidency in 1901, the stage was set for U.S. involvement in canal-building. He believed that any canal across Central America should be U.S.-owned and run, but the 1850 Clayton–Bulwer Treaty required the United States to partner with Britain in any canal venture. Roosevelt had his secretary of state work to abrogate the restrictive agreement, and before the end of his first year in office, the two countries had ratified the Hay–Pauncefote Treaty that gave the United States the right to go it alone. This was not only important legally but also symbolically, for it amounted to Britain’s tacit admission that the United States had displaced it as the leading power in the Caribbean. Five years later, the British withdrew their permanent fleet from the area.

Roosevelt quickly initiated negotiations for a canal not in Nicaragua, the route that the United States had long favored, but in Panama. In early 1903, the U.S. secretary of state and the Colombian minister in Washington negotiated the

Hay–Herrán Treaty authorizing the United States to acquire the works and equipment left behind by the defunct French company, in exchange for ten million dollars and annual payments. Colombia would cede a six-mile-wide zone to the United States for canal operations and defense for one hundred years, renewable at the discretion of the United States, while theoretically retaining sovereignty over the canal zone. The U.S. Senate quickly ratified the treaty, but finding the terms unacceptable, even insulting, the Colombian Senate unanimously rejected it.

Roosevelt's next step was to secure the independence of Panama, a province loosely attached to Colombia by a swampy, roadless isthmus. Many Panamanians had been involved on the losing side in the War of the Thousand Days, a major civil war that roiled Colombia from 1899 until 1902 (Chapter 5), and thus were receptive to independence. Panamanian leaders conspired with U.S. officials to engineer an insurrection and declare independence in November 1903. U.S. warships blocked Colombian vessels sent to subdue the rebels, and three days after the rebellion began, the United States recognized Panamanian independence.

Panama Today Fact Box



Area: 29,120 square miles

Population: 3,657,024

Population growth rate: 1.32%

Urban population: 66.6%

Ethnic composition: mestizo 65%, Native American 12.3%, black 9.2%, mulatto 6.8%, and white 6.7%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 85% and Protestant 15%

Life expectancy: 78.47 years

Literacy: 95%

Years of schooling (average): 13 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$21,800

Percentage of population living in poverty: 26%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 40.1% and lowest 1.1%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: no regular armed forces

Internet users (percentage of total population): 48.4%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

The hastily drafted and ratified Hay–Bunau-Varilla Treaty gave the United States much better terms than the one rejected by Colombia: a ten-mile-wide zone and “any other lands and waters outside of the zone . . . which may be necessary and convenient” to the project, granted in perpetuity. The issue of sovereignty was addressed in article 3: Panama grants to the United States “all the rights, power and authority . . . which the United States would possess and exercise if it were the sovereign of the territory.”¹² After meeting formidable engineering challenges and bringing the tropical diseases (particularly malaria and yellow fever) under control, U.S. authorities opened the canal to ship traffic in 1914. As Roosevelt later reflected, “I took Panama and let Congress debate while I went ahead and built the canal.”¹³

While the Hay–Pauncefote Treaty recognized a U.S. sphere of influence, the taking of Panama confirmed suspicions that the United States intended to make the Caribbean an “American lake.” Indeed, between 1903 and 1933, the United States was the maker and breaker of governments. It sent troops into nine countries, both island and mainland republics, on thirty occasions. Occupations lasted from a few months to nineteen years; in one instance, the U.S. military presence extended from 1909 to 1933 with only two brief intervals. There were nonmilitary forms of intervention as well. Political and financial advisors were dispatched to several countries, with the implicit understanding that their instructions be followed or the military boot would follow. Moreover, the mere threat of military action was in itself a form of intervention that usually produced the desired results.



Teddy Roosevelt running a steam shovel at the Panama Canal

Source: Library of Congress

These interventions had geopolitical, military, political, and commercial purposes. First, they sought to establish in practice what the British had recognized—that the United States was now the dominant power in the region, and with that power came rights and expectations. While under construction and after opening, the Panama Canal required armed defense, especially during World War I. Moreover, as an emerging world power, the United States needed expanded professional military forces, and interventions in the neighborhood served as training exercises while meeting other needs. Interventions served political ends by preventing leaders unfriendly to the United States or too friendly to other powers from taking office, removing them when they did, and working to create or preserve stability in governance. They served commercial purposes by protecting investments made by U.S. companies and individuals and by guaranteeing that loans from U.S. banks were repaid according to schedule. The United Fruit Company, the “octopus” that dominated Central America, was a major beneficiary of U.S. interventions and occupations.

President Roosevelt aggressively pursued U.S. interests in the region. His well-known dictum—“Speak softly and carry a big stick,” particularly the big stick part—aptly characterized his approach in the Caribbean. In 1904, he articulated the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. This was a response to the extension into the twentieth century of a nineteenth-century practice: military intervention by European powers to collect unpaid debts owed to their bankers or other nationals. When Venezuelan dictator Cipriano Castro withheld payment of debts to European powers, European navies blockaded the coast and shelled ports in 1902–1903 until an arbitration court arranged a schedule of payments to which Castro agreed (Chapter 5). In response to the Venezuelan intervention, Argentine foreign minister Luis María Drago issued a statement, the Drago Doctrine, that held that the use of force to collect debts from any Latin American country was illegal under international law. Roosevelt’s corollary answered Drago by restating the preeminence of the Monroe Doctrine: European powers would be bound by the Drago Doctrine but the United States would not.

Roosevelt announced his corollary in his annual message to Congress in December 1904, excerpts of which follow. He reassured Latin America of the United States’ good intentions and laid out the rules of proper behavior.

“The right of freedom and the responsibility for the exercise of that right can not be divorced. It is not true that the United States feels any land hunger or entertains any projects as regards the other nations of the Western Hemisphere save such as are for their welfare. All that this country desires is to see the neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous. Any country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship. If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.”

Source: www.ourdocuments.gov

Of course, the U.S. government would make the determination about stability, conduct, efficiency, decency, wrongdoing, and impotence. While the concrete reason for this updating of the Monroe Doctrine was to prevent further cases of European intrusion, the Roosevelt Corollary in effect formally extended the protectorate status the United States had imposed on Cuba to the entire Caribbean Basin. In exercising that protectorate, Roosevelt ordered troops to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and

Honduras while keeping troops stationed in Panama for the duration of the canal's construction.

Roosevelt's successors continued his interventionist policies into the early 1930s, until President Franklin Delano Roosevelt abandoned military interventions and occupations under his Good Neighbor Policy, announced in 1933. The longest occupations were initiated by President William Howard Taft (Nicaragua, 1909–1933 with two brief intervals) and Woodrow Wilson (Haiti, 1915–1934 and the Dominican Republic, 1916–1924). Taft articulated a refinement to the prevalent gunboat diplomacy launched by Roosevelt: Dollar Diplomacy. Addressing Congress in 1912, Taft said: “This policy has been characterized as substituting dollars for bullets.”¹⁴ The basic idea was to eliminate at its roots the problem of European intervention for the purpose of collecting debts by having U.S. banks purchase those debts. Failure to repay creditors, then, would be a bilateral problem between the United States and the Caribbean country. This relationship would eliminate any excuse for European intervention and uphold the principle of the Monroe Doctrine.

Once U.S. banks acquired the loans, U.S. agents took control of the customs houses, setting aside the agreed-upon portion of the taxes collected on imports to assure payment to the creditors. Since customs revenue constituted a major part, if not the majority, of government revenue, this arrangement hamstringed government spending and sometimes necessitated the unpopular raising of other taxes. It was imperative, then, to have pliant presidents and legislatures in place, backed by the threat or reality of U.S. military intervention to keep them there. When a president or a congress proved recalcitrant, they were removed and replaced either through U.S.-influenced, often rigged elections; U.S.-supported military coups; or direct U.S. military intervention.

Dollar Diplomacy did more than forestall European intervention. As Taft's message said, “the government of the United States shall extend all proper support to every legitimate and beneficial American enterprise abroad.” Not only did U.S. banks acquire existing debt, but they also extended new credit. Led by the City Bank of New York, they became the dominant financial institutions in the Caribbean Basin. Encouraged by the promise of “all proper support,” U.S. companies and individuals invested in agriculture, mining, commerce, utilities, and other economic sectors, making the United States not only the military master but also the economic hegemon of the region.

There was yet another side to Dollar Diplomacy—one designed to benefit the occupied countries as well as U.S. interests, particularly the countries where the U.S. settled in for the long haul: Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Nicaragua. Taft's 1912 message included a reference to “idealistic humanitarian sentiments.” Along with their guns, the U.S. Marines brought medics, engineers, educators, agronomists, accountants, and civil servants. U.S. medics applied what they had learned during the Panama Canal's construction about eradicating endemic tropical diseases through public health and sanitation programs. Engineers built roads,

bridges, and telegraph lines, creating the first efficient means of transportation and communication in the occupied countries. Educators reformed and expanded schools, accountants tried to straighten out public finances, civil servants overhauled the public administration, and agronomists created government agricultural services, which often directly benefited U.S. landowners.

When they ended, the occupations left behind infrastructure that the impoverished countries could hardly maintain. They also left behind U.S.-trained, ostensibly nonpolitical national constabularies to replace armies that U.S. authorities considered too political and, hence, sources of political instability. Contrary to U.S. intentions, these constabularies, or national guards, would become the instruments by which the long-term dictatorships of Dominican Rafael Trujillo (1930–1961) and the Somoza family of Nicaragua (1936–1979) seized power and governed ruthlessly.

The U.S. role in the Caribbean Basin had its share of domestic critics, but none was more forthright than Major General Smedley Butler of the U.S. Marine Corps, who said in 1940, following his retirement:

“I spent 33 years and four months in active military service and during that period I spent most of my time as a high class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. I helped make Mexico and especially Tampico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902–1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for the American fruit companies in 1903.”

Source: Smedley Butler, *War Is a Racket* (Gainesville, FL: Crisis Press, 1995), vii.

During World War I (1914–1918) and the 1920s, the United States extended its economic dominance beyond the Caribbean Basin to South America. Imports of European manufactured goods were disrupted during the war, and postwar Europe focused on rebuilding production for domestic use. U.S. interests stepped up to fill the void. The opening of the Panama Canal in 1914 gave the burgeoning industrial centers of the U.S. East and Midwest greatly improved access to the West Coast countries of South America. Latin America imports from the United States rose from 24.5 percent of the total in 1913 to 38.6 percent in 1929, and most of that growth occurred in South America.

United States Today Fact Box

Area: 3,796,742 square miles

Population: 321,368,864

Population growth rate: 0.78%

Urban population: 81.6%

Ethnic composition: white 79.96%, Hispanic 15.1%, black 12.85%, Asian 4.43%, Amerindian and Alaska Native 0.97%, and Pacific Islander 0.18%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Protestant 51.3%, Catholic 23.9%, other Christian 3.3%, Jewish 1.7%, unaffiliated 12.1%, none 4%

Life expectancy: 79.68 years

Literacy: no data

Years of schooling (average): 17 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$55,800

Percentage of population living in poverty: 15.1%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 30% and lowest 2%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 4.35%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 86.8%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

Britain's role as primary supplier of capital to South America ended with the war, as the kingdom had to marshal its financial resources for military purposes and, afterward, for recovery. As the secondary investing countries, France and Germany, followed the same course, the United States moved to replace the Europeans in investment as well as trade. The 1913 Federal Reserve Act repealed the prohibition on nationally chartered U.S. banks establishing branches abroad; National City Bank established its first foreign operation in Buenos Aires in 1914, and five years later had forty-two branches in nine Latin American countries. By the 1920s, U.S. banks were lending so much money to South American governments and companies that critics coined the phrase "the dance of the millions." U.S. corporations likewise displaced the Europeans in direct investment everywhere but Argentina, where the British maintained their hold. Mining, petroleum, agriculture, and public utilities were favored fields for U.S. investors. The rush of dollars southward between 1914 and 1929 dramatically altered the distribution of U.S. investment in Latin America: In 1914, 77.7 percent was in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean islands; in 1929, 56.1 percent of U.S. dollars was invested in South America.

LATIN AMERICAN REACTIONS TO THE NEW EMPIRE

From the 1820s to 1898, the United States laid the groundwork for an empire. Between 1898 and the Great Depression, it constructed its empire in Latin America. In the Caribbean Basin, it was military and economic; in South America, the empire was economic. During the prelude to empire, Latin Americans denounced certain actions and warned their fellows about U.S. intentions. Beginning in 1898, when the United States intervened in the second Cuban war for independence, both military intervention and economic dominance stirred virulent Latin American protest. This reaction was expressed in direct denunciations of U.S. policy, in literature, and in political ideology and organization. In the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, the reaction also included military resistance to U.S. occupation.

U.S. expansionism had its detractors from the outset. Commenting on the Monroe Doctrine, early Chilean leader Diego Portales warned that the United States intended “to conquer America, not only by force but by influence in every sphere. Take care not to escape one domination to fall under another.”¹⁵ At the time of the first Pan American Conference in Washington, José Martí, the Cuban patriot and writer, warned his fellow Latin Americans: “After viewing with judicious eyes the antecedents, motives, and ingredients of the invitation [to the Pan American Conference], it is essential to say . . . that the time has come for Spanish America to declare its second independence.”¹⁶ Observing the U.S. economic push into South America, Argentine diplomat Manuel Ugarte in 1923 labeled the United States “the new Rome.” While denouncing U.S. imperialism, Ugarte also evinced a certain admiration for its methods: “Never in all history has such an irresistible or marvelously concerted force been developed as that which the United States are bringing to bear upon the peoples which are geographically or politically within its reach. . . . North American imperialism is the most perfect instrument of domination which has been known throughout the ages.”¹⁷

The works of two authors stand out among the literary responses to U.S. expansionism. Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó published *Ariel* in 1900, in reaction to the United States’ intervention in the Cuban independence war. Derived from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, the short book has Próspero lecture students about the values in conflict in the Western Hemisphere by using the characters Ariel and Caliban. Ariel represents Latin America, with its idealism and spirituality, while Caliban represents the utilitarianism and materialism of the United States. The lesson that Próspero seeks to teach is that Latin America, unable to stop the crass advance of the U.S. empire, should look within and embrace its supposed moral and cultural superiority.¹⁸

Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, the leading Latin American modernist poet, takes a similar approach in his 1904 *Ode to Roosevelt*. He depicts the president, a symbol for the United States, as an unstoppable warrior who will inevitably conquer Latin America, but ultimately Latin Americans will survive, even thrive because of their superior values and because, in contrast to the godless Yankee, they have God.¹⁹

A nonviolent but powerful political and ideological response to the U.S. empire arose in Peru, where U.S. economic interests became dominant even before World War I—earlier than in most of South America. Three major U.S.-based multinational corporations had invested heavily by the early twentieth century: W.R. Grace and Company, Cerro de Pasco Corporation, and International Petroleum Corporation (IPC). Grace had the longest history in Peru and the most diverse portfolio. Founded as an import–export firm by an Irish immigrant to Peru, the company moved its headquarters to New York in 1866. It expanded into maritime shipping with the Grace Line—the first steamship company to link North and South Americas. By the 1920s, it owned the two largest sugar plantations in the country, which supplied much of the domestic demand for sugar and rum and exported some of its production. Entering textile manufacturing in 1902, by 1918 Grace supplied nearly half of national demand. In 1928, it entered the airplane age by combining with Pan American Airways to link the United States with the West Coast countries of South America through the airline with the hybrid name, Panagra. In addition to these very visible elements of U.S. penetration, Grace operated numerous other businesses in Peru and eventually around the world.

The Cerro de Pasco Corporation was a metals conglomerate established in the United States in 1901 to exploit copper deposits in the Andes above Lima. It built a railroad line, opened a large smelter in 1906 to process the copper and other minerals from its mines, and acquired extensive landholdings surrounding its mineral operations. By 1916, it had invested thirty million dollars in Peru, the largest investment in copper mining in South America. In the late 1920s, Cerro de Pasco employed some thirteen thousand workers—a third of Peru's mining labor force.

A subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey, IPC began operating at Talara on the north coast in 1913. By the early 1920s, it controlled 80 percent of Peruvian oil production and marketed for the remaining producers. As gasoline- and diesel-powered vehicles became common in the 1920s, IPC's signs, prominently displayed at its growing chain of gasoline stations throughout the country, became a constant reminder of foreign economic domination. The transnational corporation's power allowed it to pay minimal taxes and skirt Peruvian laws, and it was charged with inappropriate interference in Peru's internal affairs.

Given Peru's welcoming, even subservient attitude toward U.S. capital and the ubiquitous presence of the big three corporations and others, such as National City Bank, it is not surprising that a political response to what Peruvians perceived as U.S. imperialism should develop. Two men, José Carlos Mariátegui (1894–1930) and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre (1895–1979), came of age as the United States was consolidating its hold on the Peruvian economy and, by extension, its influence on Peruvian politics. Mariátegui published his very influential *Seven Essays on Peruvian Reality* in 1928. Largely focused on Peru's still-majority Indian population, his work argued for a return to the social solidarity practiced under the Incas and earlier while denouncing U.S. influence. He founded popular universities for workers and

organized a political party that in 1930 morphed into the Peruvian Communist Party. Subject to chronic poor health, he died young.

Haya de la Torre was more political builder than theoretician, and he was even more focused on the expansion of U.S. political and economic power than was his rival Mariátegui. Forced into exile by Augusto B. Leguía's government (Chapter 5), Haya founded the *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* (Popular American Revolutionary Alliance, APRA) in Mexico in 1924. He conceived the APRA as a Pan-Latin American party that would develop a national organization in each country. This dream never materialized and the party took root only in Peru, but thanks to Haya's energetic proselytizing and the resonance of his ideas, the APRA was largely responsible for spreading political anti-imperialism throughout Latin America.

The APRA platform consisted of five basic points, all of them directly or indirectly focused on U.S. military, economic, and political power in Latin America: (1) action of the countries of Latin America against Yankee imperialism, (2) political unity of Latin America, (3) nationalization of land and industry, (4) internationalization of the Panama Canal, and (5) solidarity of all the oppressed people and classes of the world. Points 1, 3, and 4 directly addressed U.S. hegemony in the region, while points 2 and 5 aimed at creating Latin American and universal unity to strengthen resistance to Yankee dominance.

With the founding of the APRA, Haya de la Torre articulated what many Latin Americans encountered as their own countries came under increasing U.S. control: investment and policy decisions made in foreign boardrooms, the surrender of land and natural resources to foreign ownership, the remittance of profits to shareholders abroad that often amounted to much more than the capital invested, and monopolies or oligopolies over major sectors of the domestic economies. In mining, oil, banana, or other enclaves, such as where Cerro de Pasco and IPC operated, the best jobs and segregated living quarters and recreational facilities were reserved for foreigners, knowledge of English was required for advancement, and attitudes of condescension toward Latin American workers were commonplace. This was the same "eyeball-to-eyeball imperialism" that Chilean nitrate workers experienced (Chapter 5).

In addition to the rhetorical, literary, and political responses to its aggressive expansion into Latin America, the United States also faced military resistance. U.S. Marines skirmished briefly with the *cacos*, an antigovernment guerrilla force in Haiti, but military engagement in the Dominican Republic was much more serious. Within months of the May 1916 intervention, a guerrilla war broke out in the southeastern region around San Pedro de Macorís, where peasants and sugar workers formed mobile units to fight the Marines. The resistance was so determined that 1,500 Marines were deployed to put down the fighters, whom U.S. authorities labeled "bandits." After five years, the guerrillas were largely marginalized, but their persistence was a primary reason for the U.S. withdrawal in 1924.

The Nicaraguan resistance is much better known. Having occupied the country since 1909 with only one brief interlude, the United States withdrew the Marines

during a period of relative stability under a conservative administration in 1925. Peace was ephemeral, however; liberals rebelled and the Marines returned the following year. This renewed intervention would have followed the standard script if not for one man: Augusto César Sandino.

Born in 1895, Sandino grew up poor. He went to work in the U.S.- and British-owned oil fields of Tampico, Mexico, in 1923. There he encountered the changes made by the Mexican Revolution, advanced political ideas, and the reality of foreign ownership of Latin American resources. Returning to Nicaragua in 1926, he joined the liberal resistance, but the following year broke with the leadership and went to the northern mountains where he established the Army in Defense of the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua. For the next five years, he continually issued denunciations



Augusto César Sandino
Source: Library of Congress

of U.S. imperialism while fighting a guerrilla war against the Marines, who despite putting 5,500 men in the field could not defeat him. By the end of 1931, the war had cost over one hundred Marine lives and several million dollars. Frustrated by failure and facing a rising opposition at home, both Congress and President Herbert Hoover balked at appropriating more funds for the occupation, and Hoover withdrew the Marines at the beginning of 1933. Sandino was assassinated the following year by the U.S.-created National Guard under the command of Anastasio Somoza García, the patriarch of the family that would rule Nicaragua for the next forty-three years.

Sandino's stand against U.S. intervention made him a hero to Latin Americans and further tarnished the reputation of the United States. He was also an inspiration to some of his fellow Nicaraguans. When a small group of young men, influenced by a visit to Fidel Castro's Cuba, rebelled in 1961 against the Somoza family dictatorship, they took to the same mountains where Sandino had fought, embraced Sandino as their role model, and adopted his name for their movement: the Sandinistas. Eighteen years later, the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) would overthrow the Somozas and carry out a revolution in Sandino's name.

Latin America and the United States had an uneasy relationship from the moment that President James Monroe issued his doctrine in 1823. In its lead-up to empire, the United States annexed Texas and half of Mexico's remaining territory while becoming active in Central America. The outcome of the Spanish–American War, followed shortly by the construction of the Panama Canal, cemented the U.S. role as the economic and geopolitical power in the Caribbean Basin—a role sustained by frequent military and political interventions. Economic conquest of South America followed World War I. Latin Americans resented the Colossus of the North but remained incapable of stopping the Yankee.

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Reflections on the Colonial Legacies, 1870s–1930

The legacies that Latin America inherited from its three colonial centuries continued to evolve during the era of the export economies. Authoritarian governance sustained the long-term dictatorships of the period, most notably Porfirio Díaz's thirty-four-year reign in Mexico. In the Caribbean Basin, U.S. intervention created or shored up dictatorships friendly to Wall Street and U.S. strategic interests. Authoritarianism was somewhat mitigated in countries where the elites devised systems of political dominance based on the forms but not the substance of democracy. Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile—where the new middle and working classes gained access to political participation—experienced limited movement toward democracy.

The rigid social hierarchy inherited from the colonial centuries became more complex as a result of the export economies. The elites further distanced themselves from the social groups below them through the accumulation of wealth and power. In the larger countries, public education and new white-collar occupations created by the export economies led to the formation of a middle class while manual labor requirements created another new social group, the proletariat. At the base of the social hierarchy, abolition in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Brazil freed the last African slaves but did not alter their social standing. Unconquered Indians were subdued, and millions of Indians lost their communal lands. Women entered the modern workforce in various capacities and began to have access to public education, but civil codes and disenfranchisement continued to severely limit their horizons.

The colonial legacy of economic dependency became much more pronounced during the era of the export economies. Integration into the world market brought economic growth and modernization, but this progress came at a cost: fluctuating commodity prices that producers could not control; investment decisions made in

corporate boardrooms in London or New York; the surrender of land and natural resources to foreign ownership; and with the latter, the remittance of profits to investors abroad that often amounted to much more than the capital invested.

The corollary of Indians' loss of land was the strengthening of the legacy of the large landed estate, which spread onto the newly conquered areas and expanded in the countries, from Mexico to Bolivia, where natives were evicted from their traditional communal lands.

The most dramatic political confrontations over the colonial legacy of the powerful and monopolistic Roman Catholic Church occurred during the half-century following independence. By the 1880s, positivism, with its emphasis on order and progress, had begun to blur the sharp divisions between conservatives and liberals—divisions that had focused on the church as the lynchpin of the colonial order that liberals wanted to change and conservatives struggled to preserve. While the status of the church would be contested again in the Mexican Revolution (Chapter 7), the church question barely resonated as a political issue in most countries by 1930.

IV

REVOLUTION, DEPRESSION,
AND COLD WAR, 1930–1959

7

The Mexican Revolution

Establishing clearly defined historical periods can be challenging. This chapter, which covers 1910–1940, is a prime example, overlapping the age of the export economies (1870s–1930) and the following plunge into the Great Depression, political change, and the Cold War (1930–1959). This book places the Mexican Revolution in the 1930–1959 period because the culmination of the country’s revolutionary transformation occurred during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940).

BACKGROUND TO REVOLUTION: THE PORFIRIATO

We examined the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz in Chapter 5. While it was hailed for bringing economic development and political stability to Mexico, the Porfiriato also sowed the seeds of its own destruction. As Díaz aged, his collaborators aged with him and the lengthy dictatorship grew brittle, shutting off meaningful political participation for Mexico’s small but growing middle class and some of its elites. In the opinion of a contemporary observer, Francisco Bulnes, the national Senate “housed a collection of senile mummies in a state of lingering stupor.”¹

More important, economic development was achieved on the backs of Mexico’s working class and its indigenous villagers. New kinds of jobs on the railroads, in the copper mines and oil fields, and in the factories that produced consumer goods created a new working class, or proletariat, that was heavily exploited and denied the right to defend its interests by forming unions and striking. As railroads knit the country together, previously marginal lands occupied largely by Indians suddenly became valuable because they were capable of producing commodities for the burgeoning urban markets or for export. As a result, Mexico’s *ejidos*—the communal landowning villages that predated the Aztec and survived the colonial period largely

intact—came under attack from hacienda owners and entrepreneurs. The Díaz government sided with the powerful, and around five thousand villages lost some or all of their land.

Another negative aspect of the Porfiriato was the U.S. appropriation of much of the Mexican economy. Lacking capital and technology, Mexico clearly needed both from foreign sources in order to develop its resources for export. Díaz promoted the development of railroads, mining, agriculture, oil, and other sectors by offering contracts and concessions to foreign investors on very favorable terms. As a result, U.S. corporations and wealthy individuals came to control much of the Mexican economy and own some of the country's largest haciendas. Total U.S. investment exceeded one billion dollars by 1910.

This dominating U.S. presence generated an intense nationalist reaction. Mexican entrepreneurs had difficulty competing with their better-capitalized American rivals. And Mexicans working for U.S.-owned railroad companies, mines, and oil fields experienced the conditions that prevailed wherever foreign-owned enclaves developed. This gave rise to the popular refrain: "Mexico is the mother of foreigners and the stepmother of Mexicans." Experiencing blatant discrimination in their own country, many developed the view that Mexico should recover its resources from exploitive foreign interests.

The Porfiriato, then, had two very distinct sides: order and progress, which benefited the few, versus exploitation and misery, which was the fate of the great majority. The observations of two U.S. citizens of the time reflect the different sides of the Porfiriato. Elihu Root, U.S. secretary of state, said in a 1907 tribute to Díaz: "I look to Porfirio Díaz, the President of Mexico, as one of the greatest men to be held up for the hero-worship of mankind."² The other observer, John Kenneth Turner, published a book in 1911 whose title encapsulates the negative side of the Porfiriato: *Barbarous Mexico*.³ It was the negative side of the Porfiriato that Turner saw and wrote about that led to the regime's destruction in the Mexican Revolution.

FRANCISCO MADERO

Despite a generalized discontent shared by displaced peasants, workers, the middle classes, and some elites who did not enjoy Díaz's favor nor share the bounty of economic development, the regime faced only nominal opposition owing to Díaz's political astuteness and powers of repression. The Mexican Liberal Party, founded in 1900, was the only significant opposition party, and when its leader, Ricardo Flores Magón, became too radical, he was harassed, then exiled. But a series of developments between 1906 and 1910 began to undermine the regime. News of brutally repressed strikes at the Cananea copper mine in 1906 and the Río Blanco textile mill the following year, the greatest Mexican labor protests to date, was widely disseminated. Beginning in 1907, drought set back agricultural production and drove up food prices, and a bank panic the same year hurt Mexican entrepreneurs. In a 1908



Francisco Madero

Source: Library of Congress

interview with James Creelman for publication in a U.S. magazine, Díaz was quoted as saying: “I have waited patiently for the day when the people of the Mexican Republic would be prepared to choose and change their government at every election without danger of armed revolutions and without injury to the national credit or interference with national progress. I believe that day has come. . . . I will retire when my present term of office ends.”⁴ That term was to end in 1910.

Although Díaz soon changed his mind about retirement, the Creelman interview set off an unprecedented flurry of political activity. *The Presidential Succession in 1910*, a thin book written by Francisco Madero, called for a fair election and further stoked political activism. Madero began a speaking tour of the country in 1909 and in April 1910 was nominated as the presidential candidate of a new party named for Díaz’s original slogan: the Anti-Reelectionist Party. As crowds and enthusiasm for Madero grew, Díaz had the audacious upstart and hundreds of his supporters arrested before the June 21 election, which Díaz, as always, won by an announced landslide.

Following the election, Madero was released from jail but confined to the city of San Luis Potosí. In early October, he escaped across the border to San Antonio, Texas, where he issued the backdated Plan de San Luis Potosí. The plan declared Díaz’s reelection illegal, named Madero provisional president, and called for a national uprising on Sunday, November 20, 1910, at 6 P.M. What began as an insurrection to overthrow a government would become, after a number of twists and turns, Latin America’s first true revolution.

Madero was a member of a large, prestigious, and very wealthy family based in the northern state of Coahuila—an unlikely background for the leader of an insurrection against a regime supported by most of his social class. But owing in part to his education in Paris and Berkeley, California, he had imbibed notions of political

democracy and come to embrace it as the cure for Mexico's ills. While he observed the deprivation and exploitation afflicting the majority of Mexicans and empathized with the victims of the Díaz system, he did not waver from his belief that political democracy was a panacea for the country's problems. Persistence in this principle would put him on a collision course with other leaders who preferred direct action to right the social and economic wrongs, with or without democracy.

When Madero crossed the border into Mexico on November 20, 1910, he was met by a handful of men rather than the hundreds he expected. Disheartened and uncertain of his future, he retreated to New Orleans to confer with family and supporters. But his ineptitude and absence did not deter hundreds, soon thousands, of Mexicans of all occupations and social classes from taking up arms, driven by pent-up grievances and frustrations that had accumulated for years. Rebels began attacking outposts of the federal army and Díaz's rural police, capturing villages and towns and merging into larger, ill-organized groups of fighters. Díaz's army proved less than battle-ready, since approximately half of its ranks were paper soldiers. The northern state of Chihuahua, where Pascual Orozco and Pancho Villa emerged as leaders, was the early center of the insurrection; soon, pockets of rebellion spread to other parts of the republic, including the state of Morelos, just south of Mexico City, where Emiliano Zapata gathered campesinos and drove the army out of the state. These developments led the timid Madero to return to Mexico in February 1911 to attempt to assert his leadership over the forces he had set in motion.

Villa and Orozco focused on capturing Ciudad Juárez, an important city on the U.S. border. As residents of El Paso watched from across the Río Grande, the rebels won a hard-fought battle on May 11, 1911. Shaken by this defeat, Díaz agreed to the



Rebels with homemade cannon

Source: Library of Congress

Treaty of Ciudad Juárez, resigned on May 25, and sailed into European exile. On his way out, the old dictator reputedly said, prophetically: "Madero has unleashed a tiger. Now let us see if he can control it."⁵ Rather than claiming the presidency immediately, Madero agreed to the naming of Díaz's foreign minister as interim president to serve until a special presidential election in October. Meanwhile, Madero made his way triumphantly from Chihuahua to Mexico City, feted at each stop along the way by local notables and rebels alike. He won the election overwhelmingly and was inaugurated as president on November 6.

Madero's administration was fraught with peril from the beginning. An idealist who believed in human goodness and a democrat who believed in the rule of law, Madero was not well suited to govern during turbulent times. With Díaz gone, so was the common enemy who had united very disparate interests and individuals. Madero refused to take advantage of his enormous popularity to dissolve the national and state governments that Díaz had put in place and replace them with men loyal to him. He urged the rebels who had overthrown Díaz to disarm but left the federal army with its Díaz-appointed officer corps intact. In other words, the old regime remained in place while Madero waited for regularly scheduled elections that he hoped would replace it.

A captive of his conviction that reform could come about only through legislation, Madero rejected demands for executive action on burning issues such as workers' rights and land reform. Zapata, the rebel leader from Morelos, visited Madero before his election to make the case for the immediate restitution of peasant lands stolen during the Porfiriato but left disillusioned by Madero's gradualist approach. Thus on November 11, 1911, only five days after Madero's inauguration, Zapata rebelled under the flag of his Plan de Ayala, which called for the immediate restoration of communal lands and went further, demanding the distribution of a third of haciendas' remaining lands to peasants and, in the case of landowner resistance, confiscation of their entire estates. In addition to Zapata's, Madero faced four other serious rebellions and several minor ones driven by policy disagreements or individual ambitions that made it impossible for him to consolidate his presidency. To put down the rebellions, he had to rely on Díaz's army.

Two of Díaz's generals, Victoriano Huerta and the former dictator's nephew, Félix Díaz, ended Madero's presidency and his life after fifteen months. They were among several military and political leaders of the old regime who wanted Madero gone and a heavy-handed administration installed to calm the constant agitation and general unrest. They were encouraged and abetted in this endeavor by U.S. ambassador Henry Lane Wilson, an appointee of President William Howard Taft and a determined protector of U.S. economic interests in Mexico. From the time of Madero's election, Wilson set out to undermine him in cables he sent to the U.S. State Department labeling him weak and indecisive, and predicting that his presidency would be short.

In October 1912, Félix Díaz instigated a rebellion but was captured and sentenced to death by a court-martial, a sentence that Madero, ever the naïve idealist, commuted to prison time. In February 1913, Díaz escaped from prison and with Huerta

conspired to overthrow Madero. Known as the Pact of the Embassy, their agreement to rotate in the presidency, with Huerta serving first, was sealed under Ambassador Wilson's tutelage—the first but not the last U.S. intervention in the Mexican Revolution. The conspirators imprisoned Madero and his vice president, José María Pino Suárez, and on February 21, had them assassinated by gunfire at point blank range. Queried about the assassination by newly inaugurated U.S. president Woodrow Wilson, the ambassador answered hypocritically that he could not interfere in Mexico's internal affairs.

FROM MADERO TO CHAOS

Madero's assassination plunged Mexico into civil war. Huerta assumed the presidency, governed as a dictator, and supported himself with a greatly expanded federal army. Governor Venustiano Carranza of Coahuila was the first to announce non-recognition of Huerta's government, and other northern governors followed suit. In March 1913, Carranza issued his call for action, the Plan de Guadalupe, a purely political statement that named him "First Chief of the Constitutionalist Army" and interim president upon Huerta's defeat. An aging patrician, Carranza relied on self-made general Álvaro Obregón from Sonora to do his fighting. He also formed a loose alliance with Pancho Villa, who created his Division of the North—also known as "*los dorados*" (the golden ones)—and honed his strategy of riding the railroads southward, unloading his cavalry for battles, and capturing important cities along the rail lines. South of Mexico City, Zapata extended his control over Morelos and parts of neighboring states.



Pancho Villa's trains

Source: Library of Congress

John Reed, a U.S. journalist, wrote the following description of Villa's army:

"Along the single track in the middle of the desert lay ten enormous trains, pillars of fire by night and of black smoke by day, stretching back northward farther than the eye could reach. Around them, in the chaparral, camped nine thousand men without shelter, each man's horse tied to the mesquite beside him, where hung his one sarape and red strips of drying meat. From fifty cars horses and mules were being unloaded. Covered with sweat and dust, a ragged trooper plunged into a cattle car among the flying hoofs, swung himself upon a horse's back, and jabbed his spurs deep in with a yell. Then came a terrific drumming of frightened animals, and suddenly a horse shot violently from the open door, usually backward, and the car belched flying masses of horses and mules."

Source: John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969), 155.

Massive participation of women was a common phenomenon in the rebel armies. Some of these fabled *soldaderas* followed their men into the armies; some fought for the cause in which they believed; others joined because they were left with few options due to the massive destruction caused by fighting, looting, and pillage; and still others joined for adventure. The *soldaderas* played varied roles: They shared their man's makeshift bed, sometimes bore children, scavenged for and prepared food, provided what medical service they could, and generally made up for the lack of support services found in formal armies. Many also bore arms and fought alongside the men, then did most of the hauling of supplies to the next camp down the line, only to fight the next battle. Many *soldaderas* are celebrated in the *corridos*, or ballads that emerged from the years of seemingly endless fighting.

Reed described the *soldaderas* as follows:

"From the tops of the boxcars and the flatcars, where they were camped by hundreds, the *soldaderas* and their half-naked swarms of children looked down, screaming shrill advice and asking everybody in general if they had happened to see Juan Moñeros, or Jesús Hernández, or whatever the name of their man happened to be. . . . One man trailing a rifle wandered along shouting that he had had nothing to eat for two days and he couldn't find his woman who made his *tortillas* for him, and he opined that she had deserted him to go with some _____ of another brigade." (156) "The water train pulled out first. I rode on the cow-catcher of the engine, which was already occupied by the permanent home of two women and five children. They had built a little fire of mesquite twigs on the narrow iron platform and were baking *tortillas* there; over their heads, against the windy roar of the boiler, fluttered a little line of wash." (163)

Source: John Reed, *Insurgent Mexico* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).

His military fortunes deteriorating by early 1914, Huerta faced a new and powerful enemy. President Woodrow Wilson, who took office almost simultaneously with Huerta, refused to recognize the general's regime, calling it "a government of butchers." In keeping with U.S. interventionist policies in the Caribbean, Wilson used a minor incident involving U.S. sailors and Mexican federal troops to occupy the port of Veracruz in April 1914. The Marines met serious resistance and in the ensuing battle hundreds of civilians were killed, causing outrage throughout Mexico and provoking anti-American demonstrations. In Mexico City, a U.S. flag tied to the tail of a donkey was used to sweep the principal plaza. But the intervention cut off Huerta's arms supply and revenue from the Veracruz customs house, giving the rebels the military advantage and forcing him to resign on July 8, 1914.

Their common enemy gone, the different orientations, priorities, and ambitions among the rebel groups came to the fore. Attempting to forestall conflict and consolidate his standing as "First Chief," Carranza called a convention of the fighting forces in the city of Aguascalientes in October 1914. But rather than achieve unity, the conference led to rupture: After Zapata's delegates sharply rebuked the attendees for not embracing agrarian reform as their top goal, Carranza responded by



Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata alternating on the presidential chair

Source: Library of Congress

expelling them. The failure of the Aguascalientes convention plunged Mexico back into war. Obregón remained loyal to Carranza, while Villa and Zapata developed an arm's-length, tentative alliance, captured on film when they alternated sitting in the presidential chair in Mexico City. Of the four major leaders, Zapata was the only one who stood steadfastly by a guiding principle: the land redistribution called for in his Plan de Ayala.

The six months following the Aguascalientes convention was a time of almost indecipherable chaos. It is difficult to sort out the factions, alliances, and objectives of the various armies and their component parts. Rather than for principles, many of the ordinary soldiers fought for men they respected, for revenge, for personal enrichment, for adventure, or for no apparent reason at all; and once caught up in the fighting it was difficult to stop, as many had nothing to return to. There was no effective central government, and the leaders and many states printed their own currencies. Mariano Azuela's classic novel, *The Underdogs*, offers insights into why Mexico seemed to lose all direction during this period and essentially disintegrated. Azuela's characters reveal their motives for fighting, lack of understanding of the differences among the major leaders, and the difficulty of quitting the fight.

War Paint, a *soldadera*: "What the hell is the use of the revolution? Who's it for? Come on, Pancraccio, hand me your bayonet. Damn these rich people, they lock up everything they've got!" (89)

Quail, a fighter: "'One good thing about it is that I've collected all my back pay,' Quail said, exhibiting some gold watches and rings stolen from the priest's house." (111)

Anastasio Montáñez, a fighter: "'What I can't get into my head,' observed Anastasio Montáñez, 'is why we keep on fighting.' Didn't we finish off this man Huerta and his Federation?" (133)

Demetrio Macías, leader of his band of fighters, and his wife: "'Why do you keep on fighting, Demetrio?' Demetrio frowned deeply. Picking up a stone absent-mindedly, he threw it to the bottom of the canyon. Then he stared pensively into the abyss, watching the arc of its flight. 'Look at that stone; how it keeps on going.' " (147)

Source: Mariano Azuela, *The Underdogs*, translated by E. Munguía, Jr. (New York: Signet, 1962).

The situation began to clear up in April 1915, when Obregón defeated Villa in two battles at Celaya. Villa was the master of the cavalry charge, but Obregón studied reports of World War I battles in Europe and used trenches and machine guns to defeat Villa decisively. Along with setbacks suffered by Zapata, Villa's defeat gave the Carranza–Obregón faction the upper hand, and President Wilson recognized

Carranza as acting president in October 1915. Both Villa and Zapata continued to fight, but with diminishing success. Angered by Wilson's recognition of Carranza, Villa attacked the border town of Columbus, New Mexico, in March 1916, killing eighteen, wounding many more, and burning the town. In response, Wilson sent an expedition under General John J. Pershing to capture Villa, but to no avail. Villa soon retired in exchange for the gift of a ranch, and Zapata was eventually assassinated by a federal army officer and his troops in 1919.

A BLUEPRINT FOR REVOLUTION

Carranza decided to cap his success and assure his place in history by giving Mexico a new constitution, as Benito Juárez had done in 1857. The document that he drew up closely paralleled the 1857 constitution but strengthened the powers of the executive; it did not address social or economic matters. He presented his draft in December 1916 to a convention assembled at Querétaro. Although the 220 delegates to the constitutional convention were all Carranza and Obregón loyalists—Villistas and Zapatistas were rigorously excluded—a majority rejected the draft. What emerged from nearly two months of acrimonious but creative proceedings was the world's most advanced constitution, a blueprint for revolution in Mexico.

How did Mexico pivot from an insurrection designed simply to replace dictatorship with democracy to adopting a constitution that spelled out a commitment to revolutionary change? There is no simple answer, but several factors were in play. Mexico by 1916 lay in ruins. Between one million and two million people had died since 1910, the result of fighting, wounds sustained in battle, epidemics, and starvation. Agricultural production dropped dramatically, leading to food riots in the cities. The economy was shattered: mines and factories had been destroyed or shuttered and many of the railroads had been rendered inoperable. The country had been humiliated by two U.S. military interventions. And Carranza, a man who had been a governor during the Porfiriato, was in charge. The delegates at the constitutional convention, a majority of them relatively young men, had to wonder what purpose had been served by years of warfare and destruction.

Several calls for radical change had surfaced during the period of warfare. None was more influential than Zapata's Plan de Ayala, and Zapata's persistence in pushing his agenda both militarily and politically made agrarian reform an issue that could not be ignored. Pascual Orozco, who along with Pancho Villa defeated the federal army at Ciudad Juárez, issued his Plan de la Empacadora in March 1912; this too was a radical document that called for improving the lot of workers and for distributing land to peasants. Even the old Porfirian Carranza eventually called for social and economic reforms in his Additions to the Plan de Guadalupe, issued in January 1915 in a bid to enlist peasant and labor support in his struggle against Zapata and Villa. The Additions called for both agrarian reform and labor legislation, and they succeeded in getting the emerging labor

organization, Casa del Obrero Mundial, to commit “Red Battalions” of workers to Carranza’s side. Given Orozco’s subsequent support of Huerta and the absence of social content in Carranza’s draft constitution, it is unlikely that either man was sincere in calling for radical reform. Nonetheless, the ideas they generated circulated and, along with Zapata’s plan and the platform of Flores Magón and the Mexican Liberal Party, influenced the thinking of the constitution writers assembled at Querétaro.

Thus—although the struggles between 1910 and 1916 were battles of men more than of parties, platforms, or ideologies, excepting Zapata—when men gathered to deliberate on the country’s future, a majority embraced profound change. The revolutionary constitution was not only a reaction against the Porfiriato, it was an attack on all of the colonial legacies that had persisted into the twentieth century. It countered authoritarian governance by reaffirming the democratic provisions of the 1857 constitution. It went beyond that document’s restrictions on the Catholic Church by banning religious schools and religious orders, expropriating all church property, prohibiting religious observances in public, forbidding clerics from criticizing the government, requiring all priests to be native Mexicans, and empowering states to regulate the number of priests within their jurisdictions.

The new constitution addressed the rigid social hierarchy primarily in three articles. Article 123 ordered the states to draw up labor legislation following guidelines that included a minimum wage, an eight-hour workday, legalization of unions and their right to strike, and equal wages for equal work. Article 27 subordinated private property rights to the public interest, as determined by the government, and incorporated Zapata’s principles by recognizing only two legal types of agricultural holdings: the *ejido* (or traditional communal landowning village) and “small” property. The requirement of free public education for all (article 3) would offer prospects of social mobility that had not existed before. By requiring government to protect workers, redistribute land, and educate the populace, the constitution promised a more dignified life for the lower classes. By destroying the hacienda, it would contribute to social leveling while attacking another colonial legacy: the large landed estate.

Finally, the 1917 constitution partially addressed the colonial legacy of economic dependency. Porfirio Díaz had promoted economic development by opening Mexico to U.S. and other foreign investment, with the result that foreign capital came to dominate Mexico’s economy. The new constitution aimed to recover Mexico’s resources from foreign control by limiting, without prohibiting, foreign ownership of land and by claiming ownership of all subsoil resources for the nation. This would abrogate Díaz’s concessions transferring outright ownership of minerals, including oil, to foreign investors and put Mexico on a collision course with the United States.

The constitution, of course, was only paper. It rejected the past—both the recent Porfirian past and the more remote colonial past. It was a blueprint for the future, a set of ambitious goals whose implementation would amount to a revolution. Before discussing the process that implemented major parts of the blueprint, let us briefly focus on the term “revolution.”

In Latin American history, the numerous rebellions that overthrew governments—such as Mexico experienced during the half century after independence—are often referred to as “revolutions.” But in these cases, little or nothing changed except the personnel at the helm of government. “Revolution” as used generally, including here, has another, more restricted meaning. The twentieth century witnessed several upheavals that not only overthrew sitting governments but also instituted radical changes in their countries’ economies, societies, and political systems—not just changes in governmental leadership. The 1917 Russian or Bolshevik Revolution headed by Vladimir Lenin, the 1949 Chinese Communist Revolution under Mao Zedong, and the 1959 Cuban Revolution led by Fidel Castro are well-known cases of such radical revolutions. They replaced capitalism with socialist economies, eliminated their countries’ upper classes and reorganized society on an egalitarian model, and installed very different political systems—not just different political leaders. To qualify as a true revolution, then, a new regime must bring about fundamental and thorough change—although it need not be as radical as those noted above.

Mexico’s revolution, though not nearly as sweeping, was the first to address one of the most pressing questions of the twentieth century: What about the common man and woman? Will they continue to accept their traditional place at the bottom of the social pyramid, denied decent standards of living and a voice in governance? Or will they challenge the elites for a share of their bounty and political power, or even for outright control of their countries? At century’s end, this burning question was answered in the negative. But in 1917, prospects for a different outcome seemed viable.

RECONSTRUCTION AND GRADUALISM, 1917–1934

Between the constitution’s adoption in 1917 and the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), progress on carrying out the promised revolution was slow. Carranza, the old Porfirian, was not enthusiastic about the document he did not want but was forced to accept. Thus during his formal presidency (1917–1920), little changed. His successor was colorful revolutionary General Álvaro Obregón, who lost an arm in the fighting and proclaimed that people preferred him over other politicians because with a single arm, he could not steal as much as they. Obregón was more open than Carranza to implementing the constitution but did so cautiously, for two main reasons. First, he reasoned that Mexico’s reconstruction should be his priority, and that disruption of the economy through rapid dismantling of the haciendas or excessive benefits to labor would impede recovery from the destruction caused by years of warfare. Second, with two recent U.S. military invasions fresh in Mexicans’ memory, the U.S. business lobby’s loud and persistent calls for intervention to prevent implementation of the constitution’s antiforeign provisions counseled prudence. Yet, Obregón made a start. Under Secretary of Education José Vasconcelos, a thousand rural schools were built and two thousand public libraries were opened. With Obregón’s support, Mexico’s first major national labor union, the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers, CROM), expanded its

membership and gained considerable political and bargaining power. Implementing article 27, Obregón distributed three million acres to over six hundred villages.

Obregón's successor, Plutarco Elías Calles, was another general risen through the ranks during the civil wars. He held office for four years (1924–1928) as prescribed by the constitution; but having built a powerful political machine, he named and controlled three short-term presidents who followed him between 1928 and 1934. During his own presidency, he built upon and accelerated Obregón's beginnings at reform, distributing some eight million acres of land, opening two thousand rural schools, and supporting the growth of the CROM. At his direction, however, progress on the promised revolution slowed under his three puppet presidents. In 1929, Calles engineered the unification of all the revolutionary generals who controlled various parts of the country under the umbrella of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR).

Whereas Carranza and Obregón had largely ignored the constitution's anticlerical provisions, Calles began implementing them, stepping up the deportation of foreign priests and the closing of monasteries and religious schools. He also tolerated the more sweeping measures taken by Tabasco state governor Tomás Garrido Canabal, who was not only anticlerical but antireligious. Garrido closed and looted churches, removed crosses from graves, and required all priests in his state to marry, which the Catholic Church prohibited. On his farm, he had a hog named the Pope, a donkey named Christ, a cow named the Virgin of Guadalupe, and a bull named God. English author Graham Greene's acclaimed novel *The Power and the Glory* portrays Tabasco under this purge of all traces of religion.

Calles's and Garrido's measures elicited a response from the archbishop of Mexico City, who declared that Catholics could not accept the 1917 constitution—setting up a confrontation not unlike that between Pope Pius IX and the authors of the 1857 constitution. The archbishop's next step was audacious: a strike by the church, which stopped the holding of mass and dispensation of all the sacraments, including baptisms and last rites, so that people entered and exited the world without proper ceremony. The moves and countermoves led in 1926 to the Cristero Rebellion—so named for the rebels' battle cry "*Viva Cristo Rey*" (Long live Christ the King). The uprising was carried out primarily by thousands of conservative peasants, sometimes led by priests, centered in rural Jalisco and neighboring states. Both rebels and government carried out atrocities until negotiations brought peace and the resumption of church functions after three years.

While progress on implementing most of the constitution was slow, Mexico in the 1920s experienced important change of a different kind: the recasting of national identity. Throughout the first century of independence, Mexico's elites had identified themselves and their country with Europe. Europe offered the models, the ideas, and the fashions. The 1910 celebration of the centennial of independence featured French champagne and an exhibition of Spanish art, while beggars were kept off the streets so as not to sully the splendid occasion. But the upheaval of war and the constitution's provisions for uplifting the common people focused attention on the Indian, past and present.

Mexico Today Fact Box



Area: 758,449 square miles

Population: 121,736,809

Population growth rate: 1.18%

Urban population: 79.2%

Ethnic composition: mestizo 62%, Amerindian (predominantly) 21%, Amerindian 7%, and other (mostly European) 10%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 82.7%, Protestant 8%, and none 4.7%

Life expectancy: 75.65 years

Literacy: 95.1%

Years of schooling (average): 13 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$17,500

Percentage of population living in poverty: 52.3%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 37.5% and lowest 2%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 0.59%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 41.1%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

Secretary of Education Vasconcelos invited artists to use the walls of public buildings, and Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, David Siqueiros, and others took full advantage to depict natives as noble souls vitiated by the Spanish conquest, whose protagonists—soldiers and priests—were rendered as villains. The Syndicate of Painters and Sculptors issued a manifesto in 1923 admonishing artists to produce “at this historic moment of transition from a decrepit order to a new one, . . . a rich art for the people instead of an expression of individual pleasure.”⁶ Archaeologists studied the magnificent ruins left by preconquest peoples, while anthropologists and folklorists discovered what had been hiding in plain sight: the Indian. The government created the Department of Indigenous Affairs in 1936 to heighten the focus on Mexico’s forgotten past and the reality of its present. The emergence of the despised and marginalized Indian into the light of art and scholarship fostered the development of a new national identity: Mexico was not European, but a mestizo nation.

REVOLUTION, 1934–1940: THE CÁRDENAS PRESIDENCY

Calles and the new PNR backed Lázaro Cárdenas, another revolutionary general and former governor of Michoacán, in the 1934 presidential election. Cárdenas entered office determined to move Mexico toward the promised revolution. His background was modest, and his upbringing in the heavily Indian state of Michoacán familiarized him with the plight and needs of Mexico’s most exploited. As governor from 1928 to 1932, he had promoted labor and peasant organizations, distributed land, and emphasized rural education.

Cárdenas campaigned throughout the country, covering some sixteen thousand miles by airplane, train, burro, and foot, reaching remote communities where rather than make flowery speeches, he listened to the residents’ needs and grievances. He was elected president at a propitious time for change. Mexico was in the depths of



Lázaro Cárdenas

Source: Library of Congress

the Great Depression, with production down and unemployment soaring, and as in the United States under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the dire situation called for creative, even radical, solutions. Moreover, with Roosevelt's newly announced Good Neighbor Policy that proclaimed the end of U.S. military interventions (Chapter 8), the specter of yet another U.S. military foray into Mexico faded. The last obstacle to vigorous implementation of the constitution was Calles, who had become conservative and still dominated national politics. Astute maneuvering and alliance-building allowed Cárdenas to outflank his former patron and send him into exile in April 1936.

Among Cárdenas's priorities was implementing article 123 of the 1917 constitution on labor relations. He supported a new, more progressive national union, the *Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos* (Confederation of Mexican Workers,

CTM), over the corrupt CROM. Under the 1931 national labor code, government-appointed arbitrators were required to resolve strikes that could not be settled amicably. Using this tool, Cárdenas encouraged strikes and put the weight of the state on the side of workers, resulting in real advances in wages and working conditions. The labor code stipulated that if companies could or would not comply with arbitrators' rulings, they would be expropriated; when this tactic was used against foreign companies, Cárdenas also advanced the goal of recovering the Mexican economy from foreign control while benefiting labor.

Cárdenas also accelerated the pace of agrarian reform. From 1917 to 1934, six presidents had distributed some twenty-six million acres to *ejidos* and individuals; Cárdenas awarded nearly fifty million acres, primarily to *ejidos*, and established a special credit bank that made loans to over three thousand five hundred *ejidos* during his term. Many of the recipients were villages that produced primarily for their own subsistence, but such was the president's faith in communal landownership that he turned eight million acres of prime cotton land in Coahuila and Durango states into a thirty-one-thousand-family *ejido* that produced primarily for the market. By 1940, around a third of Mexico's still heavily rural population had received land and twenty thousand *ejidos* had benefited. Haciendas still existed, but whereas half the rural population in 1910 lived and worked on them, in 1940 only around 15 percent continued to do so. Not only were millions of persons liberated from the onerous life of hacienda laborers, but the colonial legacy of large landed estates dominating rural Mexico also ended.

From the promulgation of the Constitution until Cárdenas's presidency, the promise of political democracy had been met in form but not in substance. Carranza, Obregón, and Calles were generals, accustomed to command. National political parties appeared in the 1920s, and Congress blunted some presidential power, but authoritarianism was still entrenched at the national level and in numerous states where generals ruled like old-fashioned caudillos. The PNR founded by Calles was essentially an organization of those generals. As president, Cárdenas was also head of the PNR, and he used that as an instrument to promote democratization.

His strategy was to reduce the generals' power by incorporating broad sectors of the population into the party. In 1938, he renamed the party the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (Party of the Mexican Revolution, PRM), whose statement of purpose was "the preparation of the people for the establishment of a workers' democracy as a step toward socialism."⁷ The party was comprised of four sectors with ostensibly equal power: the military; the "popular," which included bureaucrats, white-collar workers, and business interests; the CTM, representing labor; and the Confederación Campesina Nacional (National Peasant Confederation), which he had established in 1935 to organize the beneficiaries of agrarian reform. This corporatist arrangement brought millions of Mexicans into the political system through their associations. Cárdenas's idea was that rather than competing in the political arena as separate parties, the sectors could bargain within the PRM on issues such as candidates for office, programs, and specific policies. Critics found the single-party democracy undemocratic,

particularly in more recent times; but for the first time in Mexico's history, common people had access to the political system through the PRM.

Cárdenas was also concerned with recovering Mexico's economy from foreign domination. As noted above, his administration used labor laws to expropriate numerous foreign, largely U.S.-owned enterprises, and foreign holdings were also taken in the course of redistributing land. But since the 1917 constitution's promulgation, the major issue involving foreign economic domination had been oil. Development of oil fields along the Gulf of Mexico by U.S. and British companies had made Mexico a major oil producer and exporter. Article 27 negated the ownership of subsoil resources that Díaz had sold, and the threat of expropriation caused great concern abroad, especially in the United States.

Heavily influenced by oil interests, President Warren Harding had withheld recognition of Obregón's government until an agreement was reached on the impact of article 27. The oil men wanted an international treaty, but a face-saving compromise known as the Bucareli Agreements emerged from negotiations in 1923, stipulating that any properties that had been developed for production prior to the Constitution would not be subject to nationalization. The issue came to the fore again under Calles, who proposed that the exemption for working oil fields be capped at fifty years, but the president essentially dropped the proposal under U.S. pressure. So when Cárdenas took office, the question of ownership of oil fields remained unresolved.

It was not Mexico's claim to subsoil rights, imbedded in article 27, that led to the showdown over oil. Rather, it was a 1936 strike by a union of oil workers. As stipulated by the labor code, after the parties failed to agree, the strike went to arbitration. According to the oil companies, the outcome was a set of concessions that they could not afford, and they appealed to the Mexican Supreme Court, which upheld the arbitrators' decision. In response, the companies made a counteroffer of wages and benefits, accompanied by a demand that the government not intervene again in their business. Incensed and insulted by this behavior, Cárdenas expropriated the companies on March 18, 1938, and created a government monopoly, *Petróleos Mexicanos* (Mexican Petroleum, PEMEX), over the production and distribution of oil and gasoline. This bold gesture of nationalism elicited broad support: School children and adults lined up to donate pennies, pesos, and jewelry for the anticipated cost of paying the companies off, which ultimately was negotiated down to a fraction of actual value. March 18 was designated the Day of National Economic Independence, and PEMEX became a symbol of Mexican economic nationalism.

FROM REVOLUTION TO EVOLUTION: THE MEXICAN MIRACLE

Following the oil expropriation, Cárdenas began to moderate his policies, focusing less on social change and more on economic development. As Obregón and Calles had done, and as Mexican presidents would continue to do throughout the twentieth

century, he designated his successor—an act known as the *dedazo* (finger pointing). Rather than point the presidential finger, as expected, at Francisco Múgica, a fire-brand who had been instrumental in making the 1917 constitution revolutionary, he selected a moderate and the last military man to rule Mexico, General Manuel Ávila Camacho. Under Ávila Camacho and his successors, governments emphasized economic progress over social engineering without stopping the social changes that Cárdenas set in motion or accelerated.

As in the other large Latin American countries, the economic hardship brought about by the Great Depression led in Mexico to policies favoring industrialization (Chapter 8). As in those countries, the state took a leading role in promoting manufacturing and building the infrastructure necessary to the effort's success. The economic nationalism displayed by Cárdenas continued in the push for industrialization: Nacional Financiera, a government agency, was established in 1940 to provide financing for industry. In an effort to prevent a recurrence of the foreign takeover of Mexico's economy that had occurred under Díaz, the government enacted a 1943 regulation requiring 51 percent Mexican ownership in many areas of the economy, while foreign investment was prohibited altogether in others. Through industrialization and the "green revolution" that boosted agricultural production in the 1950s, Mexico experienced steady economic growth of 6 to 7 percent annually from the early 1940s to the early 1970s. Even as the country's population nearly doubled between 1940 and 1960, when it reached thirty-five million, per capita GDP growth amounted to around 3 percent. With industrialization came accelerated urbanization. Overwhelmingly rural in 1910, Mexico was 51 percent urban in 1960.

While the pace of agrarian reform slowed in the 1940s and 1950s, social progress continued to be made. Organized labor remained strong, although less militant, and labor's share of the national income remained steady. A comprehensive social security system was established in 1943 and school construction continued apace: 78 percent of Mexicans had been illiterate at the time of Madero's 1910 uprising; in 1940, the percentage was 55 percent, and in 1960, two-thirds were able to read and write. The quality of life of village women was enhanced as corn mills spread throughout the country, relieving them of the onerous, age-old burden of spending predawn hours grinding corn on the traditional metate (or grinding stone) for the family's daily tortillas. Due to labor shortages during World War II, the United States and Mexico established the *bracero* program that sent thousands of Mexican men north to work in agriculture and on railroads, enabling them to bring home cash. The 1940–1960 period brought a significant expansion and consolidation of a middle class and improved living conditions for workers and beneficiaries of agrarian reform.

The political stability that had begun to emerge from the chaos of war in the 1920s was strengthened by Cárdenas and further institutionalized in the 1940s and 1950s. Ávila Camacho eliminated the military sector of the PRM in 1941, cementing civilian control of political life and making Mexico one of only a handful of countries

to avoid military dictatorships later in the century. After another name change in 1946, the dominant party, now known as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) ruled without serious competition until almost the end of the twentieth century. As noted, this single-party “democracy” had salient undemocratic features: During their six-year terms, presidents were nearly as powerful as absolute monarchs and often corrupt, and the mechanisms that Cárdenas created to allow input from peasants and workers tended to work in the opposite way—transmitting orders from the top of the party to the base. Nonetheless, despite its dictatorial tendencies and its corruption, through most of the twentieth century the PRI proved responsive to the needs of ordinary Mexicans, accelerating agrarian reform when pressure built up or investing in food security and social programs when incomes lagged.

The post-1940 period, then, brought rapid economic development, social improvement, and political stability to Mexico. Observers of Latin America and of what came to be called the “developing world” of Africa and Asia detected a contrast between Mexico and most of the other countries of that group. They called the difference “the Mexican Miracle,” a phenomenon that lasted into the 1970s, when new challenges arose.

Assessing Mexico’s transformation between 1910 and 1940 requires asking the following question: Did Mexico experience thorough and fundamental change in its economy, society, and political system? How does it compare with the benchmark twentieth-century revolutions—the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban? Mexico did not replace capitalism with socialism, but did significantly alter property rights and worker–employer relations. It did not eliminate the upper class, but reduced its influence and allowed other social groups to advance. It did not eliminate authoritarian governance but expanded popular participation in the political process, transforming the political system without fully delivering the promised democracy. Compared with the century’s radical revolutions, the Mexican was moderate. As a result, some scholars have questioned whether what happened in Mexico really qualifies as a revolution, but most think it does qualify, and the term “Mexican Revolution” has stuck.

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8

Depression, Political Change, and Cold War

This chapter examines developments between the onset of the Great Depression in 1930 and the beginning of Fidel Castro's Cuban Revolution in 1959. This was a period of far-reaching transformations in Latin America's economy, society, and politics. While the pace of change appeared to accelerate during these three decades, as always change was tempered by continuity with Latin America's colonial past.

DEPRESSION, INDUSTRIALIZATION, AND WORKERS

The U.S. stock market crash on October 24, 1929 (Black Thursday), rippled through the world by the following year. In Latin America, the Great Depression was a watershed event that closed out the era of the export economies and ushered in a new period of economic nationalism, social mobilization, and political change. Coming just over a decade after World War I had disrupted international trade, causing serious economic and social repercussions in Latin America, the Great Depression destroyed the intricate import–export patterns that had developed since the 1850s and coalesced by the 1880s into the first global economy. The collapse of the economies of the industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America greatly reduced demand for Latin America's raw material exports. With diminished export earnings, Latin America could not continue to import the same volume of manufactured goods as in previous years.

The effects of the Great Depression in Latin America varied from country to country and, within some countries, from region to region, but overall they were severe: The value of most countries' exports fell by half or more by 1932, and the volume of those exports declined as well. Cuba and Chile were among the hardest hit. Chile's heavy dependence on mineral exports, copper and nitrates, deeply affected

the country as manufacturing faltered in North America and Europe and agricultural producers reduced their use of nitrate fertilizer. The value of Cuba's sugar harvest fell by three-quarters between 1929 and 1933, crippling the entire economy.

The Great Depression brought significant change in economic and social policies throughout much of the world. In the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt engineered the New Deal—a combination of economic stimulus and social programs for the working and middle classes. In Latin America, economists and political leaders embraced policies designed to reduce the exaggerated economic dependency that had arisen as a result of their reliance on raw material exports and whose deleterious effects were now wreaking havoc. Responses varied according to countries' population size and degree of pre-Depression economic development. In the larger, more developed countries, governments adopted a policy of rapid industrialization, known as import-substituting industrialization (ISI), to produce goods that they could no longer afford to import. For Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina and to a lesser degree Chile, Peru, and Colombia, ISI offered the potential for local manufacture of formerly imported goods and for job growth to offset the Depression's impact on employment. Thus, governments promoted the expansion of capacity in existing factories producing light consumer goods and the development of new manufacturing in steel, petrochemicals, durable consumer goods, and other heavy industries. In the smaller South and Central American and Caribbean countries, ISI was a less attractive option, as their smaller populations and lower income levels did not provide markets of sufficient size to provide economies of scale for manufacturing.

Because of high start-up costs and the difficulty of competing with imports, the new manufacturing sectors had to be constructed behind high protective tariffs. Abandoning nineteenth-century liberal *laissez-faire* economic doctrine, governments became heavily involved in directing the economies, often building infrastructure and investing directly in manufacturing plants. Some countries adopted Soviet-style five-year plans (or six-year plans in the case of Mexico, coinciding with presidential terms) for economic diversification and growth.

Governmental agencies, such as Chile's *Corporación de Fomento* (Development Corporation, CORFO), Mexico's *Nacional Financiera* (National Development Bank), and Argentina's *Instituto Argentino de Promoción del Intercambio* (Argentine Institute for Trade Promotion, IAPI) were established in the 1930s and 1940s to stimulate the development of national industries and in many cases to own them. In Brazil, the government invested in various manufacturing enterprises, the most important of which was the *Volta Redonda* steel mill opened in 1946. These efforts brought substantial growth in the role of manufacturing in the larger countries' economies: Between 1929 and 1957, industry as a percentage of GDP rose from 23 to 32 in Argentina, 14 to 22 in Mexico, 12 to 23 in Brazil, 8 to 20 in Chile, and 6 to 16 in Colombia while total industrial output skyrocketed. By the early 1960s, domestic industry supplied over 90 percent of consumer goods in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. The United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA),



Modern factories on Mexico City outskirts, 1940s

Source: Associated Press

founded in 1948 and led by Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch, consistently promoted ISI for the larger, more developed countries.

As manufacturing expanded after 1930, so did the working class that it employed. As the working class grew, it sought to build on the gains it had made previously in a few countries (Chapter 5), and unionization was the key to progress. National labor organizations predated the Great Depression in Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, but with the growth of industry they gained power in national politics, particularly in Argentina and Mexico where labor leaders formed alliances with the dominant national parties. In Colombia and Peru, the labor movement split between Communist-affiliated and more conservative unions, while in Chile the Socialist and Communist parties vied for the support of organized labor. Regardless of the particulars, wherever significant industrialization occurred, the growth of labor organization translated into workers' political power.

In the 1930s and 1940s, governments expanded or created agencies designed to adjudicate between labor and capital. This became an urgent task with the rise of new political groups and parties, including Soviet-sponsored Communist parties, that embraced anti-capitalist ideologies and radical solutions to the economic and social problems that accompanied the Depression. Thus, departments or ministries of labor were established or expanded and labor codes enacted or refined. Some governments did more to forestall potential labor unrest. Peruvian governments of the early 1930s, for example, created make-work projects, built worker housing, and opened subsidized worker diners while enacting new labor legislation and establishing a social security system for blue-collar workers. Chile, Mexico, Uruguay, Brazil, Argentina, and others built on earlier laws to expand their social security systems in the 1930s and 1940s. White-collar workers, a main component of the growing middle class, also gained social security benefits in the larger countries during the post-Depression period.

The lure of industrial jobs was a magnet for Latin America's rural poor, who flocked to the cities in search of work and a better life. As a result, Latin America's cities began a period of rapid growth that has continued to the present. Buenos Aires led the way, growing from 476,000 in 1930 to 6.7 million in 1960—an increase of 1,409 percent. Other capital cities also grew impressively, as did Brazil's industrial center, São Paulo. By 1960, Latin America had four of the world's fifteen largest metropolitan areas. Moving to the cities gave these millions of people access to better educational opportunities, and radio and—for some—television transcended the barrier of illiteracy, opening them to a wider world than they had known in the countryside. This burgeoning urban population provided a base for new political parties and movements that challenged the established order and gave rise to the phenomenon of populism.

The promise of a better life that attracted the rural masses proved elusive for many of them as the cities could not provide jobs for all, resulting in the expansion of a substratum of people without regular work. Whereas earlier rural-to-urban migrants had found quarters in the tenements in the city centers, the new arrivals were forced into makeshift housing that they constructed of scrap wood, tin, cardboard, and other scavenged materials in mushrooming slums, primarily on the cities' outskirts. These migrants came from the impoverished interior of northeastern Brazil, the hinterlands of Argentina, the abandoned nitrate works in Chile, the Peruvian Andes, and rural Mexico; they normally were landless or, in the case of Mexico, lacked sufficient good land to achieve a decent standard of living. They formed *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, *villas miseria* in Buenos Aires, *callampas* (mushrooms) in Santiago, *barriadas* in Lima, and *colonias populares* in Mexico City. These settlements were an important part of the urban scene by the 1950s and have continued to grow to the present.

Carolina Maria de Jesus, a black woman migrant from rural Brazil to a *favela* in São Paulo, left a rich account of life as a marginalized slum dweller in the diary she kept between 1955 and 1959. She lived with her three children in a rickety dwelling

that she constructed of discarded materials and minimally furnished with salvaged articles, surrounded by dozens of migrants living in similar circumstances. The *favela* that she called home, Canindé, was one of a growing number of such settlements in São Paulo. A sober and responsible woman, she collected scrap paper and sold it for a pittance, foraged for the food she could not buy, and occasionally received charity from a church. She aspired to have her children receive an education, but encountered a common situation among Latin America's extremely poor: While there was a primary school nearby, her children lacked proper shoes and clothing to be able to attend regularly. The dream that kept her going was to live in a brick house in a normal neighborhood. Hunger was her constant companion.

"Vera doesn't have shoes and she doesn't like to go barefoot." (4)

"In the morning I'm always nervous. I'm afraid of not getting money to buy food to eat. But today is Monday and there is a lot of paper in the streets." (42)

"Today is the birthday of my daughter Vera Eunice. I can't give her a party for this would be just like trying to grab ahold of the sun with my hands. Today there's not going to be any lunch. Only supper." (85)

"I made coffee for João and José Carlos, who is ten years old today. I could only give him my congratulations, because I don't even know if we are even going to eat today." (97)

"Senhor Dorio was shocked with the primitive way I live. But he must learn that a *favela* is the garbage dump of São Paulo, and that I am just a piece of garbage." (135)

"I got out of bed at 4 a.m. and went to carry water, then went to wash clothes. I didn't make lunch. There is no rice." (138)

"When I find something in the garbage that I can eat, I eat it. I don't have the courage to kill myself. And I refuse to die of hunger!" (149)

"I told the children that today we were not going to eat. They were unhappy." (171)

Source: Carolina Maria de Jesus, *Child of the Dark: The Diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus*, translated by David St. Clair (New York: Signet, 2003).

MILITARISM

The collapse of the Latin American economies precipitated political instability and social mobilizations that many governments were unable to control. Thus within three years of the onset of Depression, the majority of Latin American countries experienced military coups. In some cases, the military regimes were short-lived; such was the case in Chile, where in 1932 a military faction overthrew the government, established a one-hundred-day "Socialist Republic," and gave way to a new elected

government the same year. In other cases, such as Argentina, military or military-dominated regimes not only retained power for several years, but also developed a pattern of frequently displacing elected governments for decades to come. In Peru, military governments established in the aftermath of economic collapse ruled off and on into the 1970s. Rather than restoring stability, the 1931 military coup in Ecuador led to a parade of nineteen presidents in the next seventeen years, none of whom finished his term.

In the Dominican Republic, a 1930 coup paved the way for thirty-one years of dominance by Rafael Trujillo. Trujillo had served in the National Guard that the United States created before withdrawing from its long-term occupation in 1924, and quickly rose to head the force. Whether serving as president (1930–1938 and 1942–1952) or pulling his puppets' strings, Trujillo ruled with an iron fist, brutally repressed his enemies, and massacred thousands of immigrant Haitian workers in 1937. Part of his success came from the cult of personality that he developed: He made himself the country's patriarch without whose blessing nothing could be done; bestowed upon himself dozens of official titles, including "Great Benefactor of the Nation" and "The First and Greatest of the Dominican Heads of State"; and even renamed the Western Hemisphere's oldest European city, Santo Domingo, as Ciudad Trujillo. Trujillo was assassinated in 1961.

Nicaragua's Anastasio Somoza García was another dictator who parlayed command of a U.S.-created "nonpolitical" constabulary into long-term rule. The U.S. occupation force created the National Guard to replace the highly politicized Nicaraguan army before withdrawing in 1933 and named the affable, English-speaking Somoza its commander. Within three years, Somoza assassinated Augusto César Sandino (Chapter 6), purged the National Guard's officer corps of Conservatives, installed fellow Liberals in their places, and assumed the presidency. He ruled as a heavy-handed dictator until his 1956 assassination; he was succeeded by two sons, Luis Somoza Debeyle and Anastasio "Tachito" Somoza Debayle, who kept Nicaragua in family hands until the Sandinista revolution of 1979. During the forty-three years of family rule, the Somozas occasionally allowed trusted lieutenants to wear the presidential sash, but no one other than a Somoza ever commanded the National Guard—their personal armed force. They also counted on unwavering U.S. support, regardless of the repression that the family consistently used to maintain control. The power they wielded allowed the Somozas to acquire great personal wealth; by the time he was overthrown in 1979, Tachito reputedly owned one-fourth of the Nicaraguan economy.

As authoritarian governance surged after 1930 under military dictators, Costa Rica moved in the opposite direction. Following a disputed 1948 election, rebel groups led by José Figueres prevailed after a few weeks over the national army, and Figueres presided over a junta that restored order. The junta enacted several reforms, none more important than the abolition of the army—a measure imbedded in a new constitution adopted in 1949. While retaining a small force for internal security, the government redirected the military budget to education and public health, in the process cementing Costa Rica's credentials as one of Latin America's most enduring democracies.



Anastasio Somoza García in National Guard uniform, 1955

Source: Associated Press

POPULISM

The unsettled political climate brought on by the Great Depression gave rise in a few countries to a new phenomenon: populism. Populism was based on alliances between organized labor and the new industrial elite, often with middle-class support, and the partial exclusion of the agrarian and mining interests that had been the backbone of the export economies. Labor support was premised on the delivery of improved wages and living standards, while private sector industrialists backed leaders who provided conditions, such as tariffs and new infrastructure, necessary for the growth of manufacturing. Balancing these groups were powerful, usually charismatic presidents who used authoritarian governance and nationalist rhetoric and actions to keep the alliance intact and to repress proponents of more radical change. In some cases, the armed forces constituted integral parts of the populist coalitions.

In Mexico, Lázaro Cárdenas's government (Chapter 7) was a populist coalition that extended beyond the working class to incorporate the peasantry as well. Brazil under Getúlio Vargas (1930–1945) provided another example of populism. After coming to power through a military coup, Vargas adopted policies to promote economic development and favor the growing urban labor force, in the process shifting power to the central government and away from the oligarchic state political machines that dominated the country during the First Republic (1889–1930) (Chapter 5). In 1937, he instituted the authoritarian *Estado Novo*, or New State, a semi-corporatist government that borrowed organizational principles from Benito Mussolini's Italy. Among Vargas's most notable development projects were the Volta Redonda steel mill, noted earlier, and the state-owned oil company, Petrobras. He also nationalized the power and telephone services. He showered benefits on the

workers he organized into unions and recruited into the Labor Party founded late in his tenure, delivering social security, a forty-eight-hour work week, paid vacations, and a minimum wage. Although it did not participate directly in governance, the military also propped up the Vargas regime until the winds of democracy generated by the Allied victory over fascism in World War II made his continuance in office untenable. Vargas was elected to a new term in 1950 but could not reassemble his earlier coalition and was overthrown in 1954, leading to his suicide.

The government of Juan Domingo Perón in Argentina (1946–1955) was the most complete expression of a populist regime. Perón's rise to power was grounded in the 1930 military coup that overthrew the middle-class Radical Party government of Hipólito Yrigoyen (Chapter 5). Driven by the Great Depression and the military leadership's antidemocratic attitude and ambition for power, the coup led to a sixteen-year period of alternating military and civilian governments. With the outbreak of World War II, Argentines were torn between support for the Axis Powers (Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan)—a position strongly held within the military—and the critical importance of the British market for Argentine exports. Concurrently, industrial growth expanded the working class, which had developed little political power because a great portion of workers were immigrants and hence noncitizens and nonvoters. But with the Great Depression halting the flow of immigrants to Argentina and the passage of time, most of the working class by 1940 was native-born but still underrepresented in the political arena.

Led by General Arturo Rawson, the military took power again in 1943 and, following the fascist model, banned political parties the following year. The fifty-year-old colonel Perón had achieved influence in the tight-knit group that engineered the coup, the Grupo de Oficiales Unidos (United Officers' Group). He was rewarded with the seemingly unimportant post of head of the Department of Labor and Social Security and used his position to court labor by promoting unionization, supporting strikes, and delivering benefits. As his power grew, he was promoted to minister of war and vice president, but apprehensive about his rapidly rising influence, his military colleagues arrested him in October 1945. At this point his wife, Eva Perón, and his labor support saved him; rallied by Evita (as she was known), workers marched and threatened mayhem until their patron was released. From that point, Perón consolidated his power within the military, continued building strength with labor, and won the 1946 presidential election with 54 percent of the vote. Thus began *Peronismo*, a unique phenomenon that continues to be strong today.

As it developed, Peronism was a blend of populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism, based on the twin pillars of labor and the military. Perón continued cultivating labor support by delivering benefits and dignifying workers. Evita's popularity and charisma and her personal connection with the poor, who were known as *descamisados* (shirtless ones), were essential to Perón's success with the masses. During Perón's nine years in power, the number of unionized workers quintupled from around 500,000 to 2.5 million; they included shoe shiners, kitchen workers, teachers, bureaucrats, and many others not employed in industry, all affiliated with the Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers, CGT).

With the state consistently resolving strikes on labor's terms and Perón's establishment of a mandatory Christmas bonus, workers' real wages rose by approximately a third within a few years.

Perón's nationalism was designed to enhance Argentina's international power and prestige and to wrest control of the economy from foreign interests, particularly the British. The two approaches went hand in hand, as a robust nationally controlled economy would provide the means to project Argentine power abroad. Of particular concern was the rise of Brazilian military power as a result of U.S. aid to the neighboring country in return for its support of the Allies in World War II. A broader issue was the relative decline of Argentine influence as the United States emerged as the clear hemispheric leader.

Perón launched a five-year plan for rapid economic development in 1947, the same year that he paid off Argentina's entire foreign debt and declared the country's economic independence, as Cárdenas had done for Mexico in 1938. Central to the five-year plan was the establishment of IAPI, which created a monopoly over agricultural exports, paid producers low prices, sold the commodities at high postwar prices, and delivered the profit to the state for economic and social programs and for enhancing an arms industry. In 1948, the government purchased the British-owned railroads, U.S.-owned utilities, and French-owned dock facilities. In a bid to translate economic nationalism into international prestige, Argentina's representative at the United Nations offered five billion dollars for Latin American development—a forerunner of the later U.S. Alliance for Progress (Chapter 10).

Although grounded in law and elections, Peronism was also authoritarian; Perón relied on enforcers to crush dissent and opposition. His popularity assured majority support in Congress, facilitating the enactment of legislation enhancing his powers. In 1947, he founded his own party, the *Partido Justicialista*, which featured an elaborate ideology called *justicialismo* (untranslatable, but focused on justice) that staked out a position between capitalism and socialism. *Justicialismo* was supposed to mediate among four forces in conflict—idealism and materialism, and collectivism and individualism—and yield outcomes beneficial to the new Argentina that Perón was creating. Forbidden by the constitution from seeking a second presidential term, Perón had the pliant Congress revise it; he was reelected in 1951 with over 60 percent of the vote.

The authoritarian system under construction also relied on cults of personality, of the president himself but particularly of his wife Evita, a former radio actress. Using her charisma, her almost magical bond with the common people, and her Evita Perón Foundation, she kept the masses loyal to her husband and his policies. The foundation, which used both public and donated funds to deliver generous amounts of goods to workers and their families, was created after the traditional female-run Sociedad de Beneficencia (philanthropic society) refused to name her honorary president, as it had done for first ladies since its founding in the 1820s. She also established the Feminist Peronist Party, whose efforts in favor of women's suffrage bore fruit in 1949. Being able to deliver goods and interact on a familiar basis with the *descamisados* and other ordinary Argentines made Evita an immensely powerful



Evita and Juan Domingo Perón greet a crowd of supporters

Source: Associated Press

figure of an almost saintly nature, reflected in her designation as “spiritual chief of the nation” by Congress.

Perón’s 1951 reelection marked the pinnacle of Peronism. The regime’s success relied on the high prices that Argentine food products commanded in a war-ravaged Europe that relied heavily on imports, and on the transfer of export profits to the state through IAPI. By 1951, prices had fallen and export income dropped severely, cutting into workers’ gains. Two developments in 1951 foretold trouble: a failed military conspiracy and a strike against a state-owned firm. The following year, Perón suffered a huge loss when Evita died of cancer at age 33; her loyal followers launched a campaign to have her canonized. In 1953, Perón adopted more orthodox economic policies that required worker financial sacrifices. He turned on the Catholic Church in 1954 by legalizing divorce and taking over religious primary schools, for which he was excommunicated. When the church tried to organize Catholic unions to compete with Perón’s CGT, Peronist mobs burned several churches, creating an unbridgeable chasm between the church and Peronism. As the regime’s decline accelerated, the military demanded Perón’s resignation in 1955 and he left for exile in Spain. Juan and Evita Perón were gone, but their influence was not.

WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE

Despite breakthroughs in employment and education during the era of the export economies, women still lived under patriarchal colonial-era legal restrictions in family and civil matters. Typically, married women’s property rights were very limited

or nonexistent; women could not independently take legal actions; and the husband controlled a wife's earnings and the couple's children. Only three countries reformed their civil codes to expand women's legal rights before 1930: Mexico and Cuba in 1917 and Argentina in 1926. Only one country enfranchised women during the period of the export economies, but not as a result of women's advocacy: Ecuador granted women the right to vote in 1929 because conservatives believed that they could count on them, considered obedient to the Catholic Church, to hold off rising demands for reform.

While the issue of women's suffrage had occasionally arisen in the press and in congressional debates since the late nineteenth century, the roots of the suffrage movements were found in the feminist organizations of the early twentieth century. The First International Feminist Congress, held in Buenos Aires in 1910, drew participants from Peru, Chile, Uruguay, Italy, and the United States. The National Feminist Union was founded in Buenos Aires in 1918, and a successor, the Women's Rights Association, counted eleven thousand members. Brazil, Chile, Peru, and Mexico were also the scenes of early feminist organizing. During the Mexican Revolution, the state of Yucatán under progressive governors Salvador Alvarado and Felipe Carrillo Puerto hosted women's congresses in 1916 and 1921 and even allowed women to vote, but Carrillo Puerto's assassination in 1923 ended the experimentation.

Most early feminist organizations were directed by upper-class and educated middle-class women who did not directly challenge their primary role in the home or their marginalization from public life. Rather, they focused on issues such as women's education, child welfare, and private and public morality, while parallel working-class feminist organizations advocated for women's labor issues. A number of factors converging during and after World War I created new suffrage organizations and reoriented some of the original feminist groups toward suffrage advocacy. The wartime disruption of the world economy and the resulting economic and social crises radicalized significant elements of the populations, including some working- and middle-class women. In 1920, the United States ratified the nineteenth amendment to its constitution, bringing a long struggle for women's vote to a successful conclusion. After suffrage became a political issue in some countries, the Pan American Union began to advocate for it. In 1928, it established the Inter-American Commission of Women to gather data for consideration at subsequent meetings. In 1938, after four countries had enacted women's suffrage, the Pan American Union formally resolved that women should have the same political rights as men.

Other than in Ecuador, suffrage followed concerted, often lengthy campaigns by women and some male supporters. In Costa Rica, the issue was debated in the 1919 constituent assembly. Serious, ongoing advocacy began in 1923 with the founding of the Feminist League and the Reformist Party, but it was not until the aftermath of the 1948 civil war that women achieved victory. The 1949 constitution included a number of progressive provisions, including women's suffrage along with the definitive abolition of the national army.

In Cuba, the constitutional assembly that met during the failed first independence war (1868–1878) considered enfranchising the *mambisas* (or women independence fighters), but ultimately rejected the idea. Despite his general progressivism, José Martí, initial leader of the second independence war (1895–1898), opposed extending the vote to women. The first suffragist organization, the Feminine Club, was founded in 1917; by 1923, six organizations representing different sectors of Cuban women merged into the National Federation of Feminist Associations. The Great Depression brought the radicalization of numerous citizens and their organizations and led to the 1933 overthrow of long-time dictator Gerardo Machado. His replacement as president, Ramón Grau San Martín, decreed a number of progressive measures, including the female vote, which was first exercised in 1936. Cuban women made other gains in the 1930s, including a law prohibiting discrimination in employment and elimination of the adultery law that gave men the right to kill wives for having extramarital relations. The 1940 constitution definitively enshrined women's suffrage.

In South America, women achieved the vote in different ways. The city of Buenos Aires gave women voting rights for municipal elections in 1917, but denied them the right to hold the offices for which they voted. Uruguayan and Brazilian women were the first to gain full voting rights, both in 1932. In Chile, the process was incremental. Under pressure from suffragists, Chile granted women the right to vote and hold office at the municipal level in 1935; in the first subsequent election, twenty-five of ninety-eight women candidates were elected to municipal office. Full voting and office-holding rights were granted in 1949, after a fourteen-year trial period of testing female civic capabilities. In 1961, Paraguay became the last Latin American country to enact women's suffrage.

Over the three decades of enfranchisement, women clearly gained ground in the struggle for equality with men. By 1961, they could vote in all elections and hold any office. But in many countries, the civil codes still included some of the colonial patrimonial restrictions that placed women in an inferior legal position. And literacy requirements for voting continued to deny women as well as men citizenship rights in several countries. Success in the struggle for suffrage opened important doors for women, but others remained closed.

THE BOLIVIAN REVOLUTION

Latin America's second true revolution took place in Bolivia. Landlocked since losing its Pacific littoral to Chile in the War of the Pacific (1879–1883), the Andean country followed the common pattern of transitioning from caudillo rule to a system of stable oligarchic governance that featured the forms but not the substance of democracy. The franchise was extremely limited and Indians, who constituted two-thirds of the population, were not considered citizens. In common with other countries having traditions of communal indigenous landholding,

Bolivia experienced a massive transfer of Indian lands to the elites when it entered the world market through its mineral exports (Chapter 4). From 1880 to 1900, the primary export was silver; from 1900 on, it was tin, of which Bolivia was the world's major supplier. Control of the political system shifted from conservatives to liberals with the rise of the tin export economy, but that change made no difference to the Indian majority or the urban population of mestizos: They continued to be economically, socially, and politically marginalized—aliens in their own country.

The oligarchic system experienced a minor shift in 1920, when dissident liberals organized as the Republican Union took power and enacted the country's first minimal labor and social legislation. The Depression eroded the market for tin, seriously affecting the national economy. Following the time-honored practice of going to war as a distraction from domestic problems, in 1932 President David Salamanca ordered an attack on Paraguayan garrisons in the low-lying, lightly inhabited Chaco region claimed by both countries. With a German-trained army and Paraguay still suffering the lingering effects of its decimation in the Paraguayan War (1864–1870), Salamanca and most Bolivians expected an easy victory, but the offensive faltered owing to overextended supply lines, poor military leadership, and determined Paraguayan resistance. To bolster the ten-thousand-man army, Salamanca resorted to mass conscription of over two hundred fifty thousand men, mostly Indians: The levy amounted to one in five Bolivian males, or half the male population of fighting age. These conscripts were sent to the front lines, where nearly a quarter of them were killed, another thirty-five thousand injured or maimed, and some four thousand captured; ten thousand more deserted. At the conflict's end in 1935, Bolivia lost most of its Chaco territory to Paraguay.

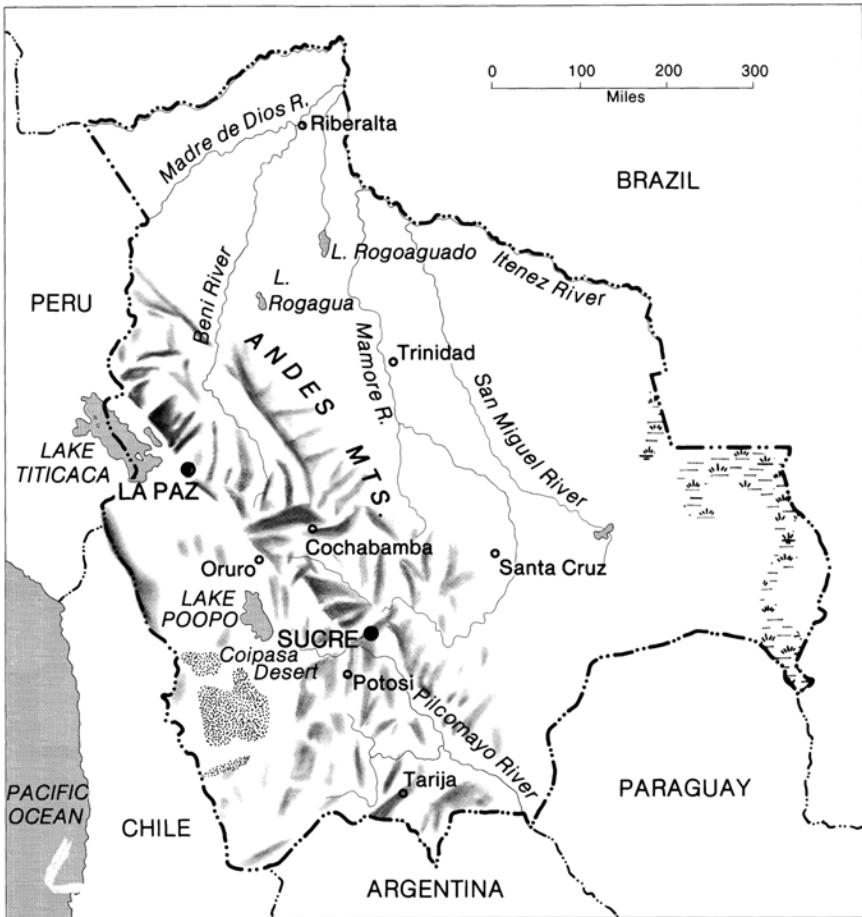
The slaughter and Bolivia's loss in the Chaco War began the unraveling of the oligarchy's control. The small urban middle and working classes and elements of the army experienced bitter disillusionment, and in the wake of a losing war, the normal discussion began: What is wrong with Bolivia? As a veteran put it, "The drama of the Chaco opened a wide furrow in our consciousness. The generation prior to 1932 speak one language; those who come after an entirely different one."¹ The "Chaco generation" began to challenge the status quo. Elements of the dissident officer corps—led by David Toro and Germán Busch—seized power in 1936, ended the oligarchy's absolute monopoly of power, and over the next three years enacted progressive reforms for labor and the middle class. Concurrently, two new left parties were founded to represent the tin miners and urban workers. In addition, a moderate reformist party, the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, MNR), was established in 1940 and developed a substantial following among the middle class. Despite these developments, only fifty-eight thousand of the country's two million people voted in the 1940 election.

Indians returning to the haciendas or *ayllus* from which they had been conscripted for cannon fodder also viewed their world differently. They had been forced to fight under horrible conditions for a country that did not recognize them as citizens and

that had stripped them of their land and reduced them to servitude. The war experience brought together for the first time Quechua, Aymara, and members of smaller native ethnicities and revealed to them the commonality of their degraded condition. Returning veterans began forming rural Indian *sindicatos* (or unions) that provided organization and pressured local hacendados for improved working conditions.

Several developments during the 1940s built momentum for change. In 1942, government troops massacred dozens of striking tin miners at Catavi. The following year, tin miners formed their first national union. In 1945, the MNR and a short-lived reformist government sponsored a first-ever Congreso Indígena (Indian Congress) attended by a thousand native leaders from around the country. This gathering provided a voice for Indians' grievances and further raised

Bolivia Today Fact Box





Area: 424,164 square miles

Population: 10,800,882

Population growth rate: 1.56%

Urban population: 68.5%

Ethnic composition: Quechua 30%, Aymara 25%, other indigenous 3%, mestizo 30%, and white 12% (author's estimates)

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 76.8%, Protestant 16%, other 1.7%, and none 5.5%

Life expectancy: 68.86 years

Literacy: 95.7%

Years of schooling (average): 14 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$6,500

Percentage of population living in poverty: 45%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 33.6% and lowest 0.8%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 1.47%

Internet users (percent of total population): 33.6%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

consciousness of their marginalization. The postwar decline in tin prices led to the furlough of thousands of tin miners in 1947; returning to their native villages, they spread revolutionary ideas learned from the left parties that had proselytized in the mines. A rebellion of hundreds of hacienda workers took place the same year in the Cochabamba Valley.

After a decade of accumulating support, the MNR won the 1951 presidential election but a military coup prevented its candidate, Víctor Paz Estenssoro, from taking office. After months of standoff, the MNR launched a rebellion against the military junta in the capital, La Paz, on April 9, 1952. The rebels exploited continuing divisions within the army and were joined by police and civilians armed from captured arsenals. On the third day, the arrival of armed tin miners in La Paz turned the tide in favor of the rebels, dispersing the army and installing Paz Estenssoro as president.

Rebellion morphed into a revolution in three basic steps. The first was the immediate elimination of the literacy requirement for voting, which enfranchised the Indian masses and turned a tottering oligarchic regime into a political democracy. A few months later, the new government nationalized the three largest tin companies—which accounted for over two-thirds of national production—and folded them into a state tin corporation, COMIBOL, thus bringing the major part of Bolivia's export sector under state ownership. The third step in the revolution was carried out from the ground up. With the collapse of the military regime, Indians living on haciendas across much of the country rebelled, drove the owners off the land, and occupied or burned the haciendas, reversing the nineteenth-century appropriation of their lands. The new government had not anticipated this radical turn of events, but in August 1953 issued an agrarian reform decree that provided a legal basis for the *de facto* agrarian reform carried out by the Indians.

Bolivia after 1952–1953 remained one of Latin America's poorest countries, but the revolution changed it profoundly. While Indians remained at the bottom of the social pyramid, most were no longer exploited by landowners and were able to make the most of the land they recovered. Nationalization of the large tin mining companies placed Bolivia's major natural resource and export commodity under government ownership, allowing for socialization of the income that formerly had gone to private hands. The overnight incorporation of the native masses into national politics abruptly ended oligarchic control. Like the Mexican Revolution and unlike the Cuban (Chapter 9), the Bolivian Revolution did not replace capitalism with socialism. Like the Mexican, it did not completely destroy the upper class, but opened the way for increased social mobility. And it established a political democracy that, although occasionally interrupted by military coups, opened the political arena to the previously marginalized Indian majority. The revolution had much to do with the failure of Che Guevara's guerrilla movement in Bolivia (Chapter 10) and with the election of Latin America's first Indian president to openly embrace his ethnicity, Evo Morales (Chapter 12).

THE COLD WAR IN LATIN AMERICA

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared an end to U.S. military intervention in Latin America, which had been focused on the Caribbean Basin. Reversing the policy inaugurated by his cousin Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt declared in his inaugural address: “In the field of world policy, I would dedicate this nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does so, respects the rights of others.”² His secretary of state, Cordell Hull, affirmed at the 1933 Montevideo OAS (Organization of American States) meeting that the United States had renounced intervention. Warmly welcomed in Latin America, the Good Neighbor Policy had a short life span: It conflicted with a new and pressing development.

Between the end of World War II and the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States and its allies confronted the Soviet Union and its supporters in a tense international standoff, the Cold War. Although they had cooperated to defeat Nazi Germany, Italy, and Japan, the U.S.–USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) alliance ended as the Soviet Union imposed postwar dominance on Eastern Europe. As cooperation gave way to fierce competition between the former allies, the Soviet Union aggressively pushed to extend its influence to the developing world of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The United States responded forcefully, Latin America became a theater in the Cold War, and the days of the Good Neighbor Policy were numbered.

The United States pursued its anti-Communist strategy in Latin America through a variety of means. U.S. military policy, formalized in the 1947 Rio de Janeiro Treaty, was designed to assure collective hemispheric security against external aggression by the Soviet Union. To implement the treaty, the United States began establishing military missions in each country, training Latin American officers in methods of conventional warfare at service schools in the United States and the Panama Canal Zone, and providing surplus World War II equipment to the region’s armed forces. But given the remoteness of Latin America from the center of the Cold War conflict and the unlikelihood of a Soviet invasion, the military buildup also focused on internal security against Communist penetration (Chapter 11).

The United States also pressured Latin American governments to ban Communist parties, Communist-influenced labor unions, and other entities considered “Communist front organizations.” By 1948, Communist parties had been outlawed in eight countries, in some of which elected members of national, provincial, and local legislative bodies were removed from office. The United States also urged Latin American governments to break relations with the USSR and thereby eliminate an irritating and potentially subversive influence. Twelve of the fifteen countries that had established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union broke them by the mid-1950s.

Guatemala became the first test case of U.S. resolve to keep Communist influence out of the Western Hemisphere. General Jorge Ubico, who seized power as

the Great Depression destabilized the country in 1931 and ruled as a dictator, was driven from office in 1944. His successor was progressive Juan José Arévalo, who allied himself with moderate and leftist elements and enacted labor and social reforms, including establishment of a social security program. Jacobo Árbenz, a leftist more committed than his predecessor to reform, was elected president in 1950. Whereas Arévalo's reforms had focused on urban labor, Árbenz set his sights on economic and social change in backward and impoverished rural Guatemala. And although not a Communist himself, Árbenz was on good terms with the growing Guatemalan Communist Party and appointed some of its members and allies to posts in his administration.

Enacted in 1952, Árbenz's agrarian reform law was moderate, calling only for expropriation of unused portions of large holdings; within eighteen months, 1.5 million acres were distributed to around one hundred thousand families, although legal formalities involving the transfer of titles to the recipients were not complete. As was its practice throughout Central America and beyond, the United Fruit Company (UFCO) had secured huge tracts of land in the lowlands and kept large parts of them in reserve for future cultivation. This made UFCO property a target of the agrarian reform agency. The agrarian reform law authorized compensation in bonds for expropriated land based on its value as declared for tax purposes. As UFCO undervalued its lands to keep its taxes low, the government offered \$628,000 in bonds while the company and the U.S. State Department demanded \$15.9 million. It was no accident that Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA director Allen Dulles, were closely associated with the law firm that represented the company.

An ardent nationalist, Árbenz was committed to asserting Guatemala's sovereignty by following an independent course in foreign policy. In the bipolar world of the 1950s, that meant sometimes siding with the USSR at the United Nations. In the United States, both government and private voices sounded the alarm: Guatemala was going Communist. Indeed, Árbenz had violated the two cardinal rules of behavior that the United States laid down for Latin American countries in the Cold War: He expropriated U.S.-owned property without prompt and adequate compensation, as determined by the United States; and he had shown himself to be, in the lexicon of the time, "soft on communism."

Consequently, a drumbeat arose in the United States for action against Árbenz; in the words of a prominent magazine writer, "The battle of the Western Hemisphere has begun."³ At the March 1954 OAS meeting in Caracas, Secretary Dulles secured passage—over several countries' objections—of a Cold War corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. In the original, President James Monroe asserted that the institution of monarchy was incompatible with the predominantly republican Western Hemisphere (Chapter 6); the updated version, the Declaration of Caracas, held that "the domination or control of the political institutions of any American state by the international communist movement . . . would constitute a threat to the sovereignty and political independence of the American states, endangering the peace of America."⁴ This revision of the Monroe Doctrine, substituting communism for monarchy as the

enemy, nullified the Good Neighbor Policy and would serve as justification for the U.S.-sponsored overthrow of Árbenz and for dozens of overt and covert interventions throughout the hemisphere over the next thirty-five years.

Faced with growing internal opposition and the threat of U.S. military action, Árbenz ordered a shipment of arms from Communist Czechoslovakia, which arrived at Puerto Barrios in May 1954. To the U.S. government, this confirmed Árbenz's Communist credentials and required his removal. Following an intense CIA-directed propaganda and psychological warfare campaign, a small CIA-trained and equipped invasion force assembled in neighboring Honduras. When the invaders crossed into Guatemala, the army refused to engage them and Árbenz resigned, blaming UFCO and the United States for his ouster. The leader of the invasion—Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas—took power, annulled the past ten years' reforms, resumed the Guatemalan tradition of dictatorship, and plunged the country into a decades-long abyss of violence.

The overthrow of Árbenz was a dress rehearsal for the U.S. approach to dealing with Fidel Castro's Cuba and other political movements that would challenge U.S. hegemony in the coming decades. The return to U.S. interventionism, only two decades after Franklin D. Roosevelt had foresworn it, became the Cold War reality in Latin America.

The Great Depression crippled the global economy, causing economic and social crises that undermined civilian governments and ushered in military regimes. The Depression also gave rise to new strategies of state-driven industrialization in the larger countries. The growth of industry increased the size and power of the working class, while the lure of industrial jobs promoted large-scale rural-to-urban migration that ended for many in the burgeoning city slums. Populist regimes supported by the working and middle classes appeared in several countries. Women gained the franchise, and Bolivia experienced revolution. The Cold War entered the region, resulting in the abandonment of the Good Neighbor Policy and the resumption of U.S. military intervention in Latin America, beginning with Guatemala in 1954.

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NOTES

1. Herbert S. Klein, *Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, 1880–1952* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 189.
2. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/good-neighbor>.
3. Peter H. Smith, *Talons of the Eagle: Latin America, the United States, and the World*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 152.
4. avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/intam11.asp.

Reflections on the Colonial Legacies, 1930–1959

The legacy of authoritarian governance was strengthened during most of the 1930–1959 period. Facing the severe economic and social crises created by the Great Depression, civilian governments gave way to military regimes in over half of the Latin American countries. In Mexico, the reaction against Porfirio Díaz's authoritarian rule led to a democratic constitution, but despite Lázaro Cárdenas's incorporation of workers and peasants into the party, the outcome of the revolution was a single-party system that operated in top-down fashion. In Argentina and Brazil, some of the progressives who had previously opposed authoritarian governance embraced Juan Domingo Perón and Getúlio Vargas for the material benefits they offered the working and middle classes. The U.S.-orchestrated overthrow of Jacobo Árbenz's government ended Guatemala's brief experiment with democracy. On the other hand, democratization advanced with the abolition of the Costa Rican military and the Bolivian Revolution's adoption of universal suffrage. The rise of democratically elected civilian governments in the 1950s, however, was short-lived.

The colonial legacy of a rigid social hierarchy continued with some modifications. The economic strategy of import-substituting industrialization expanded and empowered the working class in the larger countries, and campesinos benefited from agrarian reform in Mexico and Bolivia. Drawn by the prospect of better lives, the rural poor throughout Latin America flocked to the cities, but many ended up as did Carolina María de Jesús in the burgeoning slums. Those who remained behind in the countryside continued their humble existence. Winning the right to vote between 1929 and 1961 opened the way to fuller women's civic participation, but not to significant gains in officeholding at the national level.

The Great Depression shattered the illusion that the export economies were Latin America's path to development and prosperity. The policy of state-driven development was designed to generate growth and reduce the dependency unmasked by the

collapse of the world economy. This strategy made Latin America's larger economies more self-sufficient but, given the ongoing need to import capital and technology, economic dependency persisted in modified form while the smaller countries continued to rely primarily on raw material exports.

The colonial legacy of the large landed estate, extended and reinforced during the era of the export economies, changed little except in Mexico and Bolivia, where agrarian reform was at the heart of those countries' revolutions. Agrarian reform in Guatemala, which targeted United Fruit Company lands, was reversed following the 1954 overthrow of the Árbenz government.

The residual power of the Roman Catholic Church continued with little change except in Mexico, where the revolution earlier had revived the anticlerical impulse manifested in *La Reforma* of the 1850s and took further steps to reduce the church's power and influence. Following the 1926–1929 Cristero Rebellion, persecution of the church in Mexico eased but continued in isolated instances such as in the state of Tabasco.

V

THE ERA OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION, 1959–1990

9

The Cuban Revolution

The Cuban Revolution was Latin America's third revolution and easily its most radical. None of the world's twentieth-century revolutions was more thorough and more rapidly executed. In less than five years, Fidel Castro's government had expropriated all foreign-owned property, eliminated all but the smallest Cuban-owned businesses, and established a socialist economy on the island. Aiming to rebuild society on an egalitarian model, the regime took from the wealthy and delivered year-round employment, free education and health care, and free or nominal rent to all Cubans. The revolution replaced Cuba's western-style democracy—though flawed and temporarily eclipsed by Batista's dictatorship—with a Communist state or, in Marxist terms, with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Castro also carried out a revolution in Cuba's foreign relations, ending U.S. domination of the country and forging a close alliance with the USSR. These sweeping measures created a new Cuba and elicited both admiration and animosity throughout the Americas.

CUBA BETWEEN SPAIN AND CASTRO

Observers of Latin America were initially surprised that such a radical revolution occurred in Cuba. By most standard indicators, Cuba was one of the more developed and modern Latin American countries. In the 1950s, it ranked in the top quarter in per capita gross domestic product (GDP), literacy, medical facilities, union membership, and social security coverage; and it was first in television ownership. Yet, several elements that had been in place since 1898 or longer made revolution possible, but certainly not inevitable. The conditions that Castro was able to exploit in building the anti-Batista movement and, once in power, in conducting a sweeping revolution

can be set forth in four broad categories: strong and pervasive anti-U.S. sentiment; the deleterious effects of excessive dependence on a single export commodity, sugar; fragmentation of Cuban society; and the inefficacy and corruption of Cuba's political system and institutions.

As we have seen (Chapter 6), U.S. intervention in the second Cuban war of independence cut the colonial ties to Spain but denied Cuba true independence; rather, the Platt Amendment made Cuba a U.S. protectorate, a development that engendered deep-seated and lasting hostility toward the United States. The "right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence [and] the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty" hung over the island like a dark cloud, and the United States exercised this right often, both with and without the force of arms. The most significant political intervention came in 1933, when ambassador-at-large Sumner Welles refused diplomatic recognition to the reformist government of Ramón Grau San Martín, which succeeded long-term dictator Gerardo Machado. Facing U.S. opposition, the fledgling government was unable to consolidate its power and was overthrown by Fulgencio Batista, who established a military regime subservient to U.S. interests. Many Cubans look back to 1933 as a critical turning point—a lost opportunity to address Cuba's mounting economic, social, and political problems while moderate solutions were still viable.

U.S. control over Cuba changed complexion but not substance after 1934 when, in keeping with his new Good Neighbor Policy, President Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed to abrogate the Platt Amendment. While Roosevelt thus renounced military intervention, U.S. economic and geopolitical interests continued to dictate constant oversight and close political control over the island. As early as 1927, U.S. direct investment in Cuba had surpassed a billion dollars, the largest amount invested in any Latin American country at the time. By the 1950s, U.S. investment remained robust in the traditional agricultural and banking sectors and had diversified into newer activities such as mining, petroleum, manufacturing, and tourism. Cuba's dependence on the United States, meanwhile, remained strong as over half of its sugar and two-thirds of its total exports went to the U.S. market. Sugar imports to the United States were put on a quota basis in the 1930s and the volume of Cuban imports was subject to annual congressional review and approval. This economic control created strong leverage over Cuban politics and kept the island in a dependent position long after the Platt Amendment disappeared. The pervasive U.S. economic presence, combined with the highly visible political constraints on Cuba's freedom of action, continued to engender resentment of U.S. power over the island.

In addition to making Cuba economically dependent on the United States, heavy reliance on sugar posed economic and social problems. A primary commodity, sugar is subject to the vagaries of climate and the world market. As sugar constituted approximately 85 percent of Cuba's export earnings in the 1950s and over a third of its GDP, even minor price fluctuations had far-reaching effects on the island's economic stability. Moreover, tariff agreements and quotas giving Cuban sugar preferential treatment in the U.S. market were based on reciprocity; the favored

status of U.S. manufactured goods in the Cuban market limited the possibilities for Cuba's economic diversification and development.

Overreliance on sugar had important social ramifications as well. As cane planting expanded, sugar came to dominate Cuba's prime agricultural lands, pushing out peasant farmers and creating a huge rural proletariat—which in the 1950s constituted nearly a third of the country's labor force. The majority of this landless rural population was tied to the cycle dictated by cane cultivation and harvesting, which provided regular employment only four or five months per year. Government road maintenance and public works jobs, scheduled during the dead seasons, did not substantially alter the chronic underemployment and poverty that prevailed in rural Cuba.

Along with the social cleavages between the well-to-do and the impoverished, two other pronounced divisions weakened the cohesiveness of Cuban society. To sustain the institution of slavery, which lasted until 1886, Spanish Cuba imported large numbers of Africans until the trade ended in 1867, resulting in a population that was one-quarter African-descended in the 1950s. Blacks suffered economic and social discrimination in various forms, including some formal segregation instituted to attract U.S. tourists accustomed to that arrangement at home. Although the racial division was mitigated somewhat by easier social relations than those found in the United States, it occasionally broke into the open as it had in the 1912 "Race War of Oriente."

A widely perceived generation gap constituted another fissure in Cuban society. Each "generation" of Cuban youth in the twentieth century tended to deprecate its elders' failed efforts to rectify Cuba's problems. Thus, the 1930 generation blamed that of 1895 for failing to win true independence, and Castro's generation held the 1930 cohort responsible for the failure to consolidate reform. This wholesale dismissal of the efforts and values of preceding generations of national leaders left Cuban youth with few models and traditions, predisposing them to radical and bold approaches to solving Cuba's national problems.

A final condition that made the island susceptible to revolution was widespread disenchantment with Cuba's politicians and its public institutions. Due to the constraints imposed by the Platt Amendment, Cuban government from its inception had been weak and subservient to U.S. interests, and thus unable to command the respect of its citizens. Added to the antinational, *vendepatria* (selling out of the homeland) reputation of leaders, parties, and government were the massive corruption and partisan violence that pervaded even the few democratically elected administrations. Nonetheless, many still hoped that better government could be achieved through elections until Batista's 1952 coup.

In summary, U.S. domination of Cuba, the economic and social consequences of sugar dependency, strong cleavages in the social fabric, and the dysfunctional political system gave Castro and other Batista opponents ample material with which to build mass followings. The poor, the dark, the marginalized, the disillusioned, and the nationalists—among them, the majority of the Cuban population—were

attracted by promises of change and improvements in their lives. Invoking nationalistic slogans and promising democracy, economic development, and social justice, Castro and his counterparts attracted legions of willing followers and sympathizers.

FIDEL CASTRO: FROM THE MONCADA BARRACKS TO THE SIERRA MAESTRA

General Fulgencio Batista overthrew an elected government in March 1952, three months prior to scheduled national elections. He was a well-known and widely disliked figure in Cuban politics. As leader of the military, he had exercised considerable influence over the governments of the 1930s and had served a presidential term from 1940 to 1944. Although his administration proved more progressive than most observers expected, Batista never escaped his identity as the United States' instrument for thwarting reform in 1933–1934. A presidential candidate again in 1952, he was trailing badly in the polls and seized power rather than suffer an electoral defeat.

By the mid-twentieth century, most Latin American military coups occurred in times of political, economic, and/or social crises, their leaders justifying intervention as “saving the *patria*.” As Cuba was not experiencing crisis in 1952, Batista's seizure of power was commonly viewed as an act of naked self-interest. As a result, his government was widely resented and resisted. From the outset, the progressive political



Fulgencio Batista

Source: Library of Congress

parties, university student organizations, labor unions, and even disaffected military officers organized underground cells and mounted campaigns of propaganda, street demonstrations, strikes, sabotage, and attempted coups. Thus, the dictator was unable to consolidate his regime and govern with any degree of normalcy. To retain power, he used repression that included censorship, university closings, states of siege, arbitrary arrests, torture, and selective assassinations—all of which broadened the opposition. He periodically lifted the censorship, reopened universities, and freed political prisoners as conciliatory gestures, but despite these overtures, opposition to his regime grew steadily during his nearly seven years in office.

Among the early opposition leaders was Fidel Castro, a lawyer in his mid-twenties and the son of a wealthy landowner. He had been a left-wing Ortodoxo Party candidate for Congress until Batista's coup cancelled the election. Experienced in the rough-and-tumble politics of the University of Havana, he achieved prominence among his fellow dissidents as a result of his attack on the Moncada Barracks on July 26, 1953. With some 165 followers, he set out to attack the 1,000 troops staffing Cuba's second largest army base, in the eastern city of Santiago. Typical of his maximalist approach to taking power and carrying out revolution, Castro's idea was that a successful attack would produce shock waves, ignite a popular insurrection, and bring down the regime.

Predictably, Castro's venture failed, leaving half his followers dead and most of the survivors—including himself—captured. He later admitted to bungling some basic preparations: "Due to a most unfortunate error, half of our forces, and the better armed half at that, went astray at the entrance to the city and were not on hand to help us at the decisive moment."¹ Defending himself in a military court-martial, Castro presented a historical analysis of Cuba's ills and argued eloquently the patriotic duty of taking up arms against Batista. Failing to persuade the military judges, he was sentenced to 15 years in prison, but his dramatic defense speech was circulated clandestinely in a pamphlet, *History Will Absolve Me*, which disseminated his name and message throughout the republic. While he was in prison, supporters organized a political movement named for the date of the Moncada attack, the 26th of July Movement (M-26-7).

Fidel Castro's story might have ended with his imprisonment had it not been for a May 1955 general amnesty, one of Batista's attempts to appeal to Cuban moderates. Castro immediately left for Mexico where, with his indefatigable energy and indomitable will, he raised funds and recruited fighters, including the young Argentine medical doctor Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Castro prepared for another assault on Batista, boldly announcing that he would return to liberate Cuba before the end of 1956. Meanwhile on the island, his followers recruited for the M-26-7, absorbing much of the Ortodoxo Party membership and developing underground cells.

Castro's plan of attack, developed in coordination with M-26-7 operatives in Cuba, was another maximalist attempt to defeat Batista by shock—to accomplish a seemingly impossible feat, thereby exposing the regime's weakness and provoking a generalized uprising against the dictator. The target was the entire city of Santiago,

Cuba's second largest, which was to be captured by a seaborne assault from Mexico and a coordinated uprising within the city on November 30, 1956.

As in the Moncada assault, mistakes and miscalculations plagued the Santiago plan. The overloaded launch *Granma* departed from the Mexican port of Tuxpan on November 25, 1956, in a storm, an inauspicious start that Che Guevara recorded in his diary: "We began a frenzied search for the anti-seasickness pills, which we did not find. We sang the Cuban national anthem and the 'Hymn of the 26th of July' for perhaps five minutes and then the entire boat took on an aspect both ridiculous and tragic: men with anguished faces holding their stomachs, some with their heads in buckets, others lying in the strangest positions, immobile."² Arriving two days late, Castro's eighty-two men landed in the wrong place and after three days of wandering were apprehended by army units. Had they arrived at the appointed time and place, their presence might have secured the victory of the urban insurgents who briefly took control of Santiago. Most of Castro's men were dispersed, captured, or killed, but some fifteen were able to make their way into the nearby Sierra Maestra, Cuba's highest and most rugged mountain range.

In the aftermath of his second defeat, Castro, his younger brother Raúl, Che Guevara, and the other dozen survivors faced a difficult decision: abandon the fight or adopt a different strategy. Castro's guerrilla war, a hallmark of the Cuban Revolution that was widely emulated throughout Latin America, thus was born of desperation rather than choice. Nonetheless, Castro had a singular advantage over the other groups fighting to overthrow Batista: During 1957 and early 1958, the war between Batista and his opponents centered in the cities, tying down Batista's forces and leaving Castro's ragtag band largely neglected in its remote location. While publicly claiming that Castro had been killed along with the other invaders from Mexico, the dictator took the precaution of trying to isolate Castro in the Sierra Maestra, where he presumably could do no harm, and attempting to prevent reinforcements of fighters and supplies from reaching the guerrillas. Thus, Batista's commanders strengthened military outposts on the perimeter of the Sierra Maestra, sent a few patrols into the mountains, and carried out sporadic aerial bombing but mounted no large-scale offensive against the rebels.

Left in relative peace, Castro's group evolved in seventeen months from the humblest of beginnings into a force capable of defeating Batista's army. But in the early days after the disastrous landing, the small band aspired to little more than day-by-day survival, as revealed in Che's diary: "In that period it was very difficult to enlarge our army; a few men came, but others left; the physical conditions of the struggle were very hard, but the spiritual conditions were even more so, and we lived with the feeling of being continually under siege."³ The immediate needs were sustenance and safety, both secured through the cooperation of the scattered peasantry of the Sierra Maestra, some of whom had been recruited in advance by M-26-7 operatives from Santiago. This peasant support, combined with the army's strategy of isolating rather than directly attacking the guerrillas, gave Castro's group the ability to scout the terrain and establish ever-expanding networks of trusted peasants. Free

from concerted government pressure, the guerrillas were gradually able to establish a “liberated zone”—an area in which they could operate with relative security in the Sierra Maestra.

Castro’s “army” was still tiny and virtually untested when *New York Times* senior editor Herbert Matthews introduced it to the world in February 1957. Desperate to counter Batista’s assertion of his demise and to establish his relevance within the anti-Batista struggle, Castro arranged for Matthews to cross army lines into the



Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra with brother Raúl and unidentified guerrilla

Source: Associated Press

mountains and visit the rebel camp for an interview. Castro knew how to take advantage of such a providential opportunity. Although having only around eighteen men at the time, he told Mathews that his troops operated in “groups of ten to forty, and we are winning.” He also claimed that rebel victories had lowered army morale. Deeply impressed, the veteran correspondent wrote that Castro had “mastery of the Sierra Maestra” and opined that “General Batista cannot possibly hope to suppress the Castro revolt.”⁴ Matthews’ story appeared in the *Times* on February 24, 1957, and owing to a temporary lifting of press censorship, even Cubans were able to read about Castro for the first time.

The Matthews interview disproved Batista’s claim that Castro had been killed. It also aided recruiting, allowing the group to reach around one hundred by the end of May 1957. By that time, Castro was following a classic guerrilla warfare strategy: The idea at this stage was not to conquer and hold additional territory, but to ambush the enemy at the perimeter of the liberated zone, inflict casualties, and retreat to safety before reinforcements could arrive. It was critical for the guerrillas to choose their engagements in order to avoid confrontations with superior forces that could defeat them. Following several more months of successful small-scale offensive operations, Castro took a major step in March 1958 by sending a column under the command of his brother Raúl to establish a second front in the mountains of northern Oriente province.

CASTRO’S COMPETITION AND BATISTA’S FALL

Castro was but one of several leaders competing to defeat the dictator and gain the opportunity to shape post-Batista Cuba according to their own views. While Castro worked to cultivate peasant support and establish his liberated zone, the urban resistance intensified its efforts during 1957. On March 13, the student organization Directorio Revolucionario Estudiantil (Student Revolutionary Directorate, DRE) carried out a bold strike on the presidential palace in an attempt to assassinate Batista. The attackers fought their way to the third floor, where the dictator narrowly escaped. The DRE paid dearly for its failure; its founder, José Antonio Echeverría, was killed in the attack and the police decimated its remaining leadership. In July, the regime’s assassination of popular M-26-7 leader Frank País, a potential rival of Castro for the movement’s leadership, sparked a spontaneous uprising in Santiago. This event provoked a general strike that spread throughout the country, supported by most anti-Batista groups and the populace at large, but it fizzled after a few days. Similarly, a July naval revolt broke out in Cienfuegos but collapsed after a coordinated uprising in Havana was called off.

In response to these developments, Batista increased the repression on the urban underground, severely weakening Castro’s competition within the armed

resistance. The success of any one of the 1957 actions would probably have preempted Castro's drive for power, but their failure and the deaths of Echeverría, País, and other rivals smoothed his path. Moreover, Batista's success in suppressing his urban opponents cost the dictator. The states of siege, mass arrests, and escalating murders alienated growing segments of the population, broadening the non-armed opposition to include moderate to conservative political and business leaders. In early 1958, the Catholic Church hierarchy called for mediation of the conflict and the country's major economic interest associations urged Batista to resign. In February 1958, the Partido Socialista Popular (Popular Socialist Party, PSP—the Cuban Communist Party) declared against Batista. The Communists had remained on the sidelines of the anti-Batista struggle owing to an arrangement by which the party enjoyed major influence in the labor movement in exchange for its tacit support of the dictator. They had earlier denounced Castro as a "bourgeois adventurer," but the crumbling of Batista's support left the party's position untenable.

The unraveling of Batista's regime caused serious concern in the United States. Realizing that Batista was no longer viable, Dwight D. Eisenhower's administration began seeking alternatives to him and in early 1958 embargoed arms for his army as a means of pressuring him to cooperate. As Cubans recognized, the United States was traditionally the final arbiter of Cuban politics: Regardless of the strengths or popularity of the opposition leaders, the individual or coalition that secured U.S. backing was likely to prevail in the rivalry to succeed Batista. With a range of moderate, safe contenders from whom to choose, Washington would certainly not tap the unpredictable and mercurial Castro to be its man in Havana. But Batista's refusal to resign and the rivalries among parties and factions prevented Washington and the Cuban elites from arranging a succession on their terms and made Batista's removal a military rather than a political matter.

Having parried the urban resistance and withstood an early 1958 general strike, Batista decided to eliminate the irritating presence in the Sierra Maestra. With considerable fanfare, the army in May 1958 launched what it announced would be a quick campaign to exterminate Castro's guerrillas. However, unable to get its tanks, half-tracks, mortars, and even jeeps into the rugged mountainous terrain, the army sent foot patrols into the Sierra Maestra in search of the rebels. This strategy played directly into Castro's hands: Controlling the terrain, his guerrillas ambushed the columns dispatched to destroy them. After three months of frustration and substantial losses of men and equipment, Batista's commanders called off the campaign in August and returned to the strategy of sealing off the guerrillas. Having repulsed Batista's army, Castro surged in prestige and power.

The failure of its offensive against Castro revealed that the thirty-thousand-man Cuban army was far less capable than it appeared. Having fought no wars, officers and soldiers lacked combat experience. As the pillars of Batista's regime, army commanders were chosen first for their loyalty and second for their military capabilities.

Like others trained in conventional warfare, Batista's army was frustrated by the innovative, elusive guerrilla approach. Corruption was also rampant within the army, and Castro was able to bribe officers to allow reinforcements of personnel and supplies to slip through the armed perimeter into the mountains.

Buoyed by the defeat of Batista's summer offensive, Castro expanded his military operations in late August 1958, dispatching a column of 150 fighters under Che Guevara from the Sierra Maestra to the mountains of central Cuba to cut communications between Havana and Santiago and strike a decisive blow that would bring down the regime. A second column under Camilo Cienfuegos soon reached the same area. When the final offensive was launched in early November, Castro's force had reached roughly a thousand fighters.

After cutting the central highway and railroad, on December 29, 1958, Che Guevara's fighters attacked Santa Clara, Cuba's fourth largest city, with a population of some eighty thousand. The city fell to the rebels after heavy fighting on January 1, 1959. News of the imminent fall of Santa Clara prompted Batista to abandon a New Year's Eve party at his palace and board a waiting plane to the Dominican Republic and the fraternal embrace of fellow dictator Rafael Trujillo. After traversing the heartland of Cuba in a slow-moving caravan, Castro and his guerrillas—their ranks swollen by last-minute converts—rolled into Havana on January 8 to a wildly enthusiastic welcome. They had accomplished a feat that was very rare in the twentieth century: the defeat of a country's professional military, which disintegrated after Santa Clara, leaving Castro's rebel army as the de facto national armed force. This signal accomplishment would become a major part of the Cuban Revolution's appeal to the masses of Latin America.



Mural of Che Guevara in Havana

Source: Library of Congress

THE QUESTION OF COMMUNISM

For the first four-and-a-half months following his victory, Castro's posture was fairly moderate. He and the other principal anti-Batista forces had agreed in advance on Manuel Urrutia, a respected jurist, as acting president. Urrutia selected a moderate cabinet, balanced between bourgeois figures and Castro supporters. The United States recognized the Urrutia government a week after Batista's flight, maintaining correct if not cordial relations. But as commander of the Rebel Armed Forces, Castro had de facto veto power over the formal government. Castro visited the United States in April 1959, invited by the Newspaper Editors Association to address its convention. His fifteen-day visit became a successful goodwill tour.

Beneath the facade of moderation, there were early signs of Castro's quest for power and his commitment to breaking with the past. In mid-February 1959, Castro had President Urrutia appoint him prime minister, formalizing his direct control of the government. The summary trial and execution of between three hundred and seven hundred Batista officials and collaborators was a further sign of Castro's seriousness of purpose and confirmation of his pledge from the Sierra Maestra to punish those most responsible for the repression, torture, and assassinations of Batista opponents. Given the normal scenario of exiling, not killing the operatives of deposed Latin American regimes, the executions raised significant concerns. Apprehension among some Cubans and U.S. leaders grew when Castro called off the elections he had been promising throughout the struggle against Batista, saying "Revolution first, elections later."

Even more vexing to U.S. officials and Cuban elites were increasing signs of Castro's move toward accommodation with Cuba's Communists, the PSP, a move that presaged his formal embrace of Marxism–Leninism and construction of an alliance with the Soviet Union. Despite the antagonisms resulting from the Communists' late entry into the anti-Batista struggle and their characterizing of him as a "bourgeois adventurer," Castro quickly established a close working relationship with the PSP and its leader, Carlos Rafael Rodríguez. In July 1959 Castro removed President Urrutia, who resisted the growing Communist ties, and replaced him with long-time PSP militant and lawyer Osvaldo Dorticós. The PSP offered ideological sophistication, a highly centralized organization, and historic control of major blocs of the labor movement. Moreover, having remained on the sidelines of the anti-Batista struggle until near the end, the PSP had not experienced the degree of repression suffered by most other rebel groups, and emerged from the fray intact and functional.

The PSP alliance was just the beginning of Castro's move toward Communism and the Soviet alliance. On April 15, 1961, Castro publicly affirmed that Cuba's transformation-in-progress was a "socialist revolution carried out under the very noses of the Yankees."⁵ A new governing alliance was formalized three months later with the merger of M-26-7, the PSP, and the smaller DRE into the *Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas* (Integrated Revolutionary Organizations).

After months of public hints of his Marxist sentiments, Castro declared in a long speech on December 2, 1961: "I am a Marxist-Leninist and I shall be a Marxist-Leninist until the last day of my life."⁶ The Soviet alliance, tentatively begun in February 1960 with a trade pact, was consummated in 1962. The founding of the Partido Comunista de Cuba (Communist Party of Cuba) in 1965 completed the Fidelista–Communist merger and formalized the revolution's Communist character.

Participants, observers, and scholars have addressed the intriguing question of Castro's turn to Marxism and his motivations for working with the Cuban Communists, establishing socialism, and aligning Cuba with the Soviet Union. This is a critical question, as it had and continues to have profound implications for Cuban citizens and for U.S.–Cuban relations. The embrace of Communism meant that Western norms of civil and political human rights were subordinated to economic and social human rights, both of which were delineated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁷ Cuba's 1976 constitution, which formally established a Communist state, makes this distinction crystal clear. Castro's decision to embrace Communism also alienated Cuba from the United States during the Cold War and for a quarter of a century thereafter, subjecting its people to an economic embargo that failed in its objective of bringing down the Castro government but which retarded Cuba's economic development and subjected its citizens to serious material deprivations.

An early hypothesis explaining the Communist path of the Cuban Revolution was that Castro had been a Communist all along but had hidden his true colors until firmly entrenched in power, to avoid alienating many Cubans and inviting U.S. intervention. This conspiracy theory, understandably popular with Cubans who felt betrayed by Castro, gained little credence among scholars and objective analysts.

Most observers of the Cuban Revolution assume that Castro converted to Marxism after taking power; the debate focused on whether he embraced Marxism of his own volition or whether the United States forced him into Marxism and the Soviet alliance. The latter interpretation holds that strong U.S. opposition to Castro's radical agenda drove him to seek an alliance with the Soviet Union, the only power in the bipolar world of the 1960s potentially capable of protecting his revolution from U.S. military intervention. In order to achieve Soviet support in the dangerous game of confronting the United States in its own backyard, he had to demonstrate a firm commitment to Marxism and the Soviet Union.

While acknowledging the effects of U.S. pressure, others have argued that the turn to Communism was Castro's free choice. Enjoying immense personal prestige and power following his triumph, Castro was in a position to take the revolution in any direction he might have chosen. In explaining his transition toward Communism, he alleges a gradual conversion, basically completed by 1959, to a Marxist–Leninist worldview and a conviction that Cuba's and Latin America's problems could not be resolved within the framework of capitalism: "I have had a very interesting and very effective schooling. That is simply . . . the process which,

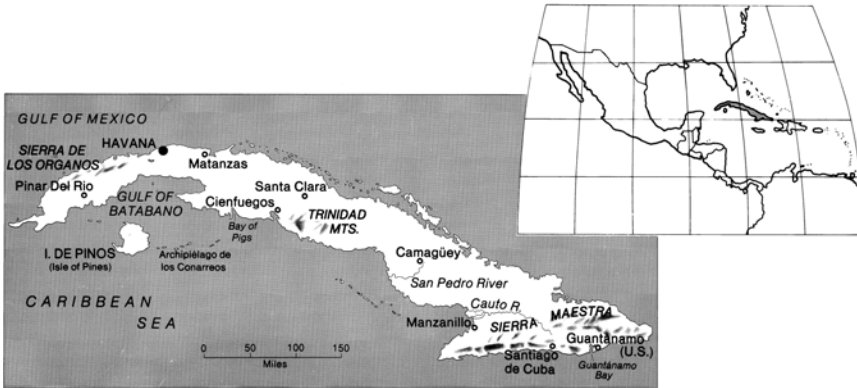
from my first questionings until the present moment, made me into a Marxist revolutionary.”⁸

In embracing Marxism and establishing a Communist state, Castro was part of a broader pattern. While today we tend to view Communism as an antiquated, failed experiment, when Castro came to power in 1959, Communism was attractive to many in the developing world because it promised to solve problems of underdevelopment and social injustice. Communism, moreover, had momentum at the time: Mao Zedong had established a Communist regime in China—the world’s most populous country—just ten years earlier, in 1949. Communist expansion in the former French colonies of Indochina was well underway, and U.S. governments from the 1950s into the 1970s were so concerned about Communist momentum in Southeast Asia that they conducted the long and frustrating Vietnam War in a vain attempt to stop it. During the 1950s and 1960s, the competition between the two rival systems—capitalism and Communism—was intense, and it was unclear which would prevail. In 1956, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev famously told a group of diplomats from capitalist countries: “Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you.”⁹ His boast was credible at the time.

Whatever the exact circumstances of Castro’s critical decisions regarding Marxism, working with the PSP, and the alliance with Moscow, it is beyond dispute that he reneged on his promise to hold elections, turning his back on the democracy promised in the M-26-7 program. He was undoubtedly correct in recognizing the incompatibility between Western democracy and social revolution; the constraints on action inherent in constitutional democracies and the power of money in the electoral and legislative processes would have thwarted Castro’s ability to carry out the radical changes to which he was committed. Yet, the establishment of a Communist state, even though it carried Fidel’s distinctive imprint, disillusioned some of his early supporters in Latin America as it did many in Cuba. It also confirmed the views of those conservatives in Washington and Latin America who argued that reform must be resisted because of its unpredictable course and potentially dangerous outcomes.

It is important to note that the establishment of Communist Party rule in Cuba followed a course unique in the annals of Communism. Rather than the Communists capturing the revolution, Castro captured the Communists for his own ends. He was either titular or *de facto* head of all government and party organizations, and his trusted veterans of the Sierra Maestra—rather than PSP cadres—completely dominated the remaining positions of power. Following the establishment of a formal Communist state in 1976, Castro held the positions of head of state and head of party without interruption until ceding power to his brother Raúl in 2008, while Sierra Maestra veterans continued to dominate the political and military leadership, eventually promoting a younger generation to top positions in the 1990s.

Cuba Today Fact Box



Area: 42,803 square miles

Population: 11,031,433

Population growth rate: -0.15%

Urban population: 77.1%

Ethnic composition: white 64.1% , mestizo (meaning mulatto) 26.6% , and black 9.3%

Religious affiliations (nominal): no data

Life expectancy: 78.39 years

Literacy: 99.8%

Years of schooling (average): 14 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$10,200

Percentage of population living in poverty: no data

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): no data

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: no data

Internet users (percentage of total population): 27.5%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

THE DOMESTIC REVOLUTION

In contrast to Mexico, in Cuba there was no significant lag time between the overthrow of the old regime and the beginning of the revolution. In Mexico, six years passed between the fall of Porfirio Díaz and adoption of the revolutionary 1917 constitution, then nearly another two decades before President Lázaro Cárdenas began vigorously implementing that constitution's revolutionary provisions (a similar delay

occurred in the Soviet Union after the Communists seized power in 1917). In Cuba, only four-and-a-half months passed between Batista's flight and the opening salvo of Castro's domestic revolution: the agrarian reform law of May 17, 1959, which launched a series of radical measures that profoundly transformed Cuba's economy and society.

In carrying out radical change, Castro in part was carrying out the progressive M-26-7 program, whose ten points included the following: political democracy, national sovereignty, economic independence, work for all, social justice, education, civil authority, religious freedom, public morality, and constructive friendship with all countries. He was also strongly influenced by his own maximalist proclivities: Beginning with the 1953 assault on the Moncada Barracks, he had exhibited a tendency to take on the greatest challenges in order to have the maximum impact, and his management of government policy reflected the same impulse. Finally, Castro had a unique opportunity during his early years in power to apply radical solutions to Cuba's problems. While Cuba's political system was already in disrepute before Batista's coup, the last semblance of legitimate authority disappeared under the dictator. Thus, Batista's flight left a power vacuum that no individual, group, or institution associated with the old regime could fill. Given his enormous initial popularity and control over the rebel army, Castro became the uncontested caudillo, or supreme leader of Cuba. There were no constraints on his appetite for change. In fact, with the support of the poor, the working and some of the middle classes, and the young, and with the elites effectively out of the political equation, momentum for radical innovation grew quickly after the victory.

Realizing a long-standing aspiration of many Cubans, the agrarian reform law limited legal holdings to one thousand acres—a fraction of the size of many Cuban- and foreign-owned sugar and cattle properties. It also abolished renting and sharecropping, and severely restricted foreign ownership. The land expropriated, much of it owned by U.S. citizens and corporations, passed into different types of holdings. Nearly one hundred thousand renters and sharecroppers received fifty-plus acres; unutilized land became state property; and rather than being broken into less efficient small parcels, large sugar and cattle holdings initially became cooperatives and later, state farms. Compensation to expropriated landowners was to be awarded in twenty-year government bonds bearing 4.5 percent interest, with prices to be based on declared value as reflected in the tax rolls, not on current market value. In response, the U.S. government demanded “prompt, adequate, and effective compensation” for its citizens—as it had done earlier when the Guatemalan government expropriated United Fruit Company's land.

A second, more radical agrarian reform law of October 1963 furthered the attack on the legacy of the large landed estate by setting the maximum legal holding at 165 acres and expropriating some ten thousand properties that exceeded the limit. The transformation of agriculture put the most valuable sector of the Cuban economy and a major part of the country's economically active population under state control.

The agrarian reform law was the first step in the progressive expropriation and nationalization of the Cuban economy, or replacing capitalism with socialism. This

process, mostly finished by 1963, transferred the privately owned economy to the state and, as a result, made virtually every working Cuban a government employee. Ownership of the economy gave the government the leverage to reengineer Cuban society by setting wages and benefits based on an egalitarian model. Expropriation of the private economy proceeded on several fronts. A major impetus to the growth of the state sector was the confiscation of all properties belonging to Batista collaborators, exiles, and others deemed enemies of the regime. During most of his early years in power, Castro's policies facilitated emigration, thus removing real and potential enemies from the country while promoting the transfer of major economic assets to the state. Initially consisting primarily of Batista collaborators and supporters, the flow of exiles swelled with Cubans' deepening realization of Castro's revolutionary intentions. While the emigrants included people from all social strata, the upper and middle classes predominated in the exodus which reached some six hundred thousand by 1974, constituting nearly a tenth of Cuba's 1958 population. As a result, the state inherited a substantial share of Cuban-owned businesses, real estate, and rural land through the policy of confiscating exiles' property.

Another major blow to private property came between August and October 1960 during a flurry of actions and counteractions pitting Havana against Washington. In response to the cancellation of the Cuban sugar quota in the U.S. market (see below), Castro decreed the expropriation of all U.S.-owned property in Cuba, without compensation. Agricultural land had already been affected; the new decree transferred major portions of the public utilities, banking, transportation, communications, sugar refining, insurance, industrial, mining, and tourism sectors of the economy to the state and made it the employer of hundreds of thousands of additional workers. The onslaught against U.S. holdings triggered the accelerated expropriation of the remaining Cuban- and foreign-owned enterprises. By 1964, the only remaining significant private activities outside of the closely regulated small farm sector were retail business and services. The "revolutionary offensive" of 1968 completed the elimination of private ownership of businesses: Restaurants, laundries, mechanic shops, and beauty parlors overnight became part of the state-owned economy, eliminating the last vestiges of the capitalism on the island.

After the revolutionary offensive, every working Cuban was subject to wages or other income set by the state. In 1968, the scale ran from 96 pesos per month for a cane cutter to around 250 pesos for skilled workers, technicians, and professionals, with only a few earning more. The minimum retirement pension was 60 pesos per month.¹⁰ On one hand, the wage scale reveals pragmatic concessions to the groups most likely to want to emigrate and most needed to make the new Cuban economy and political system work. On the other hand, the great compaction of wage differences between 1958 and 1968 clearly reveals Castro's interpretation of social justice as egalitarianism—as ending once and for all the colonial legacy of a rigid social hierarchy.

Two other elements of government policy complemented the revolutionary leveling of wages. First, year-round, full-time work was guaranteed for all Cubans. To appreciate this policy, one only need compare the new order with the 1950s, when

Cuba had approximately 10 percent year-round unemployment and 25 percent of the labor force worked less than half the year. Even for the lowly paid sugar worker, ninety-six pesos per month year-round was a monumental gain. The second policy that raised living standards for the less well-paid was the universal provision of free social services. Castro redirected much of the national budget toward establishing cradle-to-grave social welfare: education, health care, housing, transportation, retirement benefits, and vacations. Long before they were enshrined in the 1976 constitution, economic and social human rights became a fact of life in revolutionary Cuba.

REVOLUTION AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

As in Mexico, revolution in Cuba led to church–state conflict. The Catholic Church in Cuba was staffed largely by Spaniards and Cubans influenced by the conservative brand of Catholicism that underpinned the Fascist dictatorship of Francisco Franco in Spain (1939–1975). Central tenets of that strain of Catholicism were strident anti-Communism and opposition to the kinds of social reform that Castro carried out on the island. Thus, conflict arose shortly after Castro took power and began to cooperate with the PSP. It intensified with the enactment of the agrarian reform law and the beginning of the social revolution.

The church hierarchy was outspoken in its criticism of Castro's actions. Church leaders and the Catholic press denounced his rapprochement with the Cuban Communists and, as the Soviet alliance began to take shape, referred frequently to “godless” Communism and the Soviet Union's persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church. They reacted strongly to the February 1960 visit of Soviet deputy premier Anastas Mikoyan and the trade deal struck between Cuba and the USSR (see below). The regime responded by labeling the clergy “Falangist” (Franco's political party) and tying them to Cuba's elites. As tension grew, numbers of Spanish priests and nuns returned to their homeland.

In 1961, after the Bay of Pigs invasion, the government enacted several measures restricting the church. It shut down the Catholic press, nationalized Catholic schools, banned religious processions, and in September expelled some 130 priests. Religious practice was discouraged in various ways, and when the Communist Party of Cuba was established in 1965, it barred practicing Catholics from membership. Between 1960 and 1980, the number of priests and nuns on the island fell from nearly 3,000 to fewer than 450, with most of the decline occurring by 1962. The number of practicing Catholics likewise declined precipitously.

By the mid-1960s, church–state conflict had moderated, in part because of changes in the universal church. Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council in 1962; the council, which worked until 1965, called for the Catholic Church to abandon its traditional alignment with the wealthy and powerful and embrace the poor and politically marginalized. While the church did not condone Communism,

its new stance was favorable in general terms to the kinds of social change occurring in Cuba. Thus, the Pope did not excommunicate Castro and the Cuban church's hierarchy moderated its tone, even after Castro ended Christmas as a national holiday in 1969. In turn, Castro tolerated the reduced influence of the church and did not establish the degree of control that the 1917 Mexican constitution had placed on the Mexican church. Nor did he turn church buildings into museums of atheism, as occurred in the Soviet Union. From the mid-1960s on, dialogue prevented a recurrence of the intense church–state conflict of the early years of the revolution.

CHALLENGING ECONOMIC DEPENDENCY

As an integral part of his domestic revolution, Castro addressed Cuba's long-standing economic dependency. U.S. sanctions (see below) effectively ended Cuba's economic subservience to its powerful neighbor, but Castro attacked dependency at its root by focusing on sugar. He sought to create a more balanced economy by cutting back on sugar production and promoting industrialization, which had been restricted due to U.S. dominance of the market for manufactured goods. Thus while acreage planted in cane shrank after 1959, industrial plants sprouted. But the maximalist notion of instant industrialization ran afoul of the reality that industrial machinery was lacking—and that which existed could not be repaired or replaced owing to the U.S. embargo—and that raw materials for many basic products were scarce or non-existent. The need to import raw materials for a nascent industrial sector raised the thorny question of how to finance the imports without income from sugar exports.

Che Guevara's tenure as minister of industry between 1961 and 1965 further hindered the industrialization program. He experimented with replacing material with moral incentives and with various kinds of planning and market strategies, sincerely attempting to revolutionize the norms of work and production in pursuit of a Communist workers' utopia. However, the hard realities of imbedded attitudes, infrastructural weaknesses, heavy defense expenditures, and the damaging U.S. economic blockade thwarted his goals. Reacting to the failed plans of the early 1960s, Castro in 1963 reversed his approach to sugar, extending planting and setting the maximalist goal of a ten-million-ton harvest in 1970—nearly twice the average harvest of the 1950s. Having made the 10 million tons the national priority of the late 1960s, Castro directed all available investment capital and labor to sugar, weakening the recently established industrial and new agricultural enterprises while still missing the goal by 1.5 million tons.

The major economic problems of the 1960s, which set back Cuba's development, caused aggravating shortages of food and other essentials as well as consumer goods and led to the establishment of rationing in 1962. Reality forced Cuba to join the Soviet bloc's trading system, which involved barter rather than hard currencies, and to accept an annual subsidy from the Soviet Union. Despite his efforts, Castro's failure ultimately sabotaged the goal of ending sugar dependency.

Despite the economic problems of the 1960s, which have never been fully resolved, with full-time, year-round employment available at fixed wages and a host of free social services developed as fully as austere conditions permitted, a large share of Cuba's population, probably a majority, was materially better off after a few years of revolution than under the old order. Despite the imperfections of the system and the glaring shortages, life improved for the beneficiaries of change in terms of health, nutrition, housing, educational opportunity, and economic security. The redistribution of resources threatened the wealthy and the better-off middle classes, many of whom chose exile over loss of status and a reduced standard of living. Those who stayed were subject to the leveling process. This picture of change in revolutionary Cuba sums up the social revolution: It took from the rich and the comfortable and gave to the poor and needy.

THE REVOLUTION IN FOREIGN RELATIONS

The domestic revolution and the revolution in Cuba's international relations were closely intertwined. Castro took power convinced that Cuba needed both a social revolution and a release from its historic subservience to the United States, and he quickly set out to achieve both. The timing of certain domestic events inevitably affected the timing of developments in foreign relations, and vice versa; but Castro's commitment to creating a new Cuba clearly involved both arenas.

The agrarian reform law was the first substantive issue to drive a wedge between Cuba and the United States, and its impact was heightened by the already tense climate of relations resulting from provocations by both sides. In addition to the mass executions of Batista officials and his domination of government, Castro's growing popularity in Latin America made Washington nervous. Castro also aided exile invasions against dictatorships in Nicaragua, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic and promised more efforts to export his revolution. His increasing cooperation with the Communists gave U.S. officials additional grounds for concern.

Washington also contributed to the provocations. From early 1959, Cuban exiles conducted air and sea raids from Florida unhindered by U.S. authorities. U.S. vice president Richard Nixon and other officials openly urged the Eisenhower administration to take a hard line with Castro. In December 1959, Secretary of State Christian Herter hinted at possible cuts in Cuba's sugar quota, thus invoking the long-established levers of control over the island. Washington did not realize, however, that rather than bullying Castro into submission, its economic and military threats only reinforced his conviction that radical change was needed in Cuba's economy and its foreign relations.

The first concrete step in Cuba's realignment in international relations came when Soviet deputy prime minister Anastas Mikoyan visited the island in February 1960 to sign a large-scale trade and loan agreement. Tensions with Washington escalated the following month when, in an event reminiscent of the 1898 Maine incident,

a French ship delivering arms from Belgium blew up in Havana harbor, killing seventy-five dockworkers and wounding two hundred. Castro accused the United States of sabotage. On March 17, President Eisenhower approved a CIA plan to organize, equip, and train an army of Cuban exiles for military action against the Castro regime. Intended as a clandestine operation, the plan promptly became an open secret.

Beginning in April 1960, skirmishes gave way to all-out economic warfare. When the initial shipment of Soviet-supplied crude oil arrived in April—part of the trade deal with Moscow—the U.S.-owned refineries, on the advice of Washington, refused to process it. After a standoff, Castro expropriated the refineries. On July 6, Eisenhower cancelled the Cuban sugar quota for the remainder of 1960. In response, Castro completed the expropriation of all U.S. holdings on the island, locking in the collision course that was already set.

While refraining from military action, Eisenhower ratcheted up diplomatic pressures against Castro by attempting, unsuccessfully, to have the OAS (Organization of American States) condemn Cuba. On January 2, 1961, alleging that the U.S. embassy in Havana was full of CIA operatives, Castro asked the Eisenhower administration to reduce its embassy staff to the number that Cuba had in Washington; Eisenhower broke diplomatic relations the following day. The incoming administration of President John F. Kennedy extended the economic pressure on Castro by setting the 1961 sugar quota at zero.

From the break in diplomatic relations, it was only a step to military confrontation. Although he had campaigned on getting tough with Castro, Kennedy hesitated to use the CIA's exile force that was training in Guatemala. But by April 1961, two developments pushed him toward action. The presence of the exile army was becoming a volatile issue in Guatemala and thus, despite its strong anti-Castro position, the Guatemalan government began pressing Washington to remove the Cubans. Concurrently, U.S. intelligence learned that Cuban pilots training in Communist Czechoslovakia would return shortly to Cuba with Soviet MiG fighter planes. Thus, following extensive debate and deliberation, on April 5, Kennedy decided to strike; five days later, the invasion force was moved to its embarkation point in Nicaragua.

Modeled loosely on the successful 1954 CIA-orchestrated invasion of Guatemala (Chapter 8), the Bay of Pigs operation had primary and secondary objectives. The first, reminiscent of Castro's own maximalist Moncada Barracks approach, was to set off a general uprising against Castro that would result in his overthrow. This objective rested on flawed assumptions that Castro lacked popular support and that a strong opposition force would spring into action. The secondary objective, to be pursued if the first failed, was to capture and hold sufficient territory to allow the landing of a Cuban "government-in-exile" that would then call for U.S. aid in a so-called civil war against Castro. The operation was designed to appear as a purely Cuban exile affair, with no U.S. involvement.

The plan failed miserably in both objectives. Estimates of public disenchantment with the regime and of the strength of resistance groups, provided by Cuban exiles

and accepted by the CIA, were greatly exaggerated. Aware of impending U.S. military action, Castro had prepared by creating a two-hundred-thousand-person militia to back his army and establishing *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, CDRs) to exercise “revolutionary collective vigilance” over their neighbors. These mass organizations had grown rapidly and spread throughout the island by the time of the invasion. Finally, on the eve of the invasion, he arrested over one hundred thousand people of questionable loyalty. Thus, the hoped-for popular rising against Castro never began.

The secondary objective also failed, owing to miscalculations and the constraints imposed by the official U.S. line that the invasion was a purely Cuban exercise. The greatest miscalculation was that 1,400 men could defeat Castro’s army and militia. As a prelude to landing the exile force, planes with faked Cuban markings bombed air fields on April 15, 1961, to take out Castro’s small and antiquated air force. Cuban spokesmen at the United Nations immediately denounced the bombing as a U.S. action, which the Kennedy administration denied. But fearing adverse publicity and a hostile international reaction, Kennedy cancelled a second air raid despite the failure of the first one to eliminate all of Castro’s air power. Thus, when Brigade 2506 hit Girón beach at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, it encountered not only troops but also planes, which sank two ships of the exile flotilla and pinned down the landing party in swamps. Over 1,100 of the invaders surrendered by April 20, to be held captive for 20 months until ransomed by U.S. shipments of food and medicines. In addition to humiliating the United States, the Bay of Pigs fiasco enhanced Castro’s support and control in Cuba, heightened his popularity in Latin America, and accelerated Cuba’s realignment with the Soviet Union.

Having failed to overthrow the Castro government, Kennedy tightened the pressure on Cuba by formalizing and extending the economic sanctions already in place. On February 3, 1962, he issued Proclamation 3447, which prohibited all trade between the United States and Cuba. This policy would last well into the twenty-first century, and while it negatively affected the Cuban economy, it failed in its primary purpose of bringing down the Castro regime.

The revolution in Cuba’s international relations was completed by October 1962, when the United States and the Soviet Union reached the brink of nuclear war over the placement of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. From the perspective of global nuclear strategy, Cuba offered the Soviets their first opportunity to deploy short-range missiles capable of striking the United States and offsetting the U.S. advantage of missile sites in Europe. For Castro, they promised protection against further U.S. aggression. Upon learning of the missiles’ deployment, Kennedy mounted a naval blockade to intercept a Soviet convoy bringing additional missiles to the island. The world watched tensely as the Soviet fleet steamed forward until, at the last minute, the ships turned back. Premier Nikita Khrushchev subsequently agreed, without Castro’s knowledge or consent and to his great consternation, to remove the missiles already installed; in return, the United States pledged not to invade Cuba and to remove U.S. missiles from Turkey.

The years from 1962 through 1968 tested the Cuba–Soviet alliance. Always an ardent nationalist, Castro was not content for Cuba to fall from the eagle’s talons into a smothering Russian bear’s embrace. Thus for the next six years, despite growing reliance on Soviet economic and military aid, he created space to exercise an independent foreign policy. The major Cuban deviation from the Soviet line was Castro’s aggressive support of revolution in Latin America—a policy that contradicted the traditional Soviet approach of working gradually to build Communist parties and allies for revolution at some undefined future time. In addition to exhorting revolutionaries to act, Castro offered material aid and training to many Latin American insurrectionary groups. In 1966, he hosted the Tricontinental Congress, a conference of revolutionary governments and organizations from Latin America, Africa, and Asia designed to accelerate revolution throughout the Third World. The following year, he established the Organización Latinoamericana de Solidaridad (Latin American Solidarity Organization), a bureau of Latin American revolutionary parties and guerrilla groups provocatively designed to parallel the Washington-dominated OAS.

The resultant friction between Havana and Moscow surfaced in several conflicts, most notably Castro’s 1962 and 1968 purges of old-line Communists on charges of fostering Soviet interests over those of Cuba. The testing period effectively ended in 1968, however, when to the dismay of many supporters, Castro endorsed the Soviet military intervention that ended Alexander Dubcek’s “Prague Spring” in Czechoslovakia. To many observers, this gesture of subservience to Moscow signaled Castro’s reluctant abandonment of the quest for an independent foreign policy.

THE APPEAL OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

The popularity of the Cuban Revolution in Latin America derived primarily from concrete accomplishments: the victory of Castro’s guerrillas over Batista’s army, the institution of radical changes in Cuba’s economy and society for the benefit of the masses, and the elimination of U.S. economic and political dominance. But as dramatic as these developments were, they together do not explain the enthusiasm that Castro’s revolution generated in Latin America. The other ingredient that made the Cuban Revolution such an intoxicating brew was the style of the revolution—the charisma of its leader, the boldness of his policies, the visible and enthusiastic support of an apparent majority of Cubans, and Castro’s brash challenge to the United States. This flair contributed not only to the revolution’s initial impact in Latin America but also to sustaining its popularity long after the early accomplishments began to be overshadowed by the lackluster economic record, the loss of independence to the Soviet Union, and the prolongation of Castro’s dictatorship.

Fidel Castro was one of the twentieth century’s most charismatic political leaders. A spellbinding orator, he repeatedly demonstrated his remarkable ability to inspire crowds with emotional, extemporaneous four- or five-hour speeches rallying support for volunteer harvest labor or calling for vigilance against Yankee aggression. His

exhortations to greater sacrifice and the deferral of rewards sustained the revolution during the economic hardships of the 1960s. His ascetic style, his proclivity for personal contacts with ordinary Cubans, and the martial image that he projected with combat fatigues, boots, beard, and cigar—all of these traits complemented Castro's intelligence, perseverance, flair for publicity, and extraordinary powers of persuasion to make him a larger-than-life character. His supporting cast, particularly Che Guevara, added to the revolution's appeal.

Castro's impatience—his Moncada Barracks approach to getting things done—contributed to the style that made the Cuban Revolution appealing to the Latin American masses. While his impatience for economic development was a dysfunctional approach to economic management and led to the failed crash industrialization program, his maximalist approach worked in other areas. The speed of the agrarian reform and the nationalization of U.S. investments gave the revolution its momentum and broadcast the message that nothing was impossible if the political will and the support of the masses were in place.

The active support of many Cubans for the revolutionary government also enhanced the revolution's appeal in Latin America. Massive turnouts for Castro's speeches and the crowds' obvious enthusiasm for the revolution and its policies were but a partial barometer of popular support: More impressive was the widespread participation of millions of Cubans in the tasks of the revolution. The CDRs, for example, continued to grow until half the island's adult population was enrolled by 1964. And the CDRs became more diversified in their functions following the invasion crisis, assuming the roles of neighborhood civic association, organizer of volunteer labor, overseer of the rationing system, and dispenser of justice in minor matters while continuing their original mission of exercising vigilance.

Castro declared 1961 the "year of education" and launched a drive to eradicate illiteracy. Some 270,000 volunteers, mainly students, spent up to nine months in every corner of the island instructing the illiterate 24 percent of the adult population in the fundamentals of reading and writing, reportedly reducing the illiteracy rate to under 4 percent—a decent rate even for developed countries. Similarly, the rapid expansion of cane production following 1963 required great amounts of volunteer labor for harvest.

Did individuals volunteer out of love of the revolution, or were they motivated by self-promotion or the quest for privileges? Was extra labor really volunteered or subtly coerced? Regardless of the answers, the fact is that in the 1960s, millions of Cubans participated in their government's work, and this is the picture that reached Latin America where the poor and the disenfranchised could hardly avoid being favorably impressed by their perception of a government which, in contrast to their own, enjoyed the active support of and benefited from the ostensibly volunteered sweat of its citizens.

The David and Goliath character of Castro's challenge to Washington helped seal Fidel's power at home and gain support for the revolution throughout Latin America. Castro's defiance of the United States, his refusal to back down under



Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and President Osvaldo Dorticós closing the literacy campaign

Source: Associated Press

escalating U.S. pressure, his nationalization of U.S. assets, and finally his defeat of the Washington-sponsored Bay of Pigs invasion gave him the international stature of a second Bolívar—a new liberator of Latin America. This successful challenge to the hemisphere's hegemonic power resonated throughout Latin America, where almost every country had a primary symbol of U.S. imperialism—United Fruit Company in Central America, International Petroleum Company in Peru, Anaconda and Kennecott Copper in Chile, the canal in Panama, and so on—against which nationalist politicians railed but rarely acted. Castro's actions against the United States, then, combined with his flamboyant and provocative style of pulling Uncle Sam's beard, gave vicarious satisfaction to the millions who possessed even a modestly nationalist outlook.

In sum, the impact of the Cuban Revolution—while based primarily on the successful guerrilla war and the radical changes in Cuba's economy, society, and foreign relations—was greatly enhanced by the style that characterized the Castro regime during the 1960s and beyond.

Cuba experienced Latin America's third and most radical revolution. Fidel Castro, one of several leaders vying to oust dictator Fulgencio Batista, built a guerrilla force

in the Sierra Maestra and, following the defeat of his urban-based rivals, took power in January 1959. He brought rapid and thorough change to the island's economy, society, political system, and foreign relations, eventually installing a Communist regime. Castro and his revolution became enormously popular among important segments of Latin America's population on the basis of the guerrilla triumph, the egalitarian social transformation, the defiance of the United States, and the style of the revolution. Because of its wide appeal, the Cuban Revolution would be a major driving force in Latin American politics for three decades.

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1. Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me*, translator not indicated (Havana, Cuba: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1975), 39.
2. Che Guevara, *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War*, trans. Victoria Ortiz (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), 40.
3. Guevara, *Reminiscences*, 81.
4. *New York Times*, February 24, 1957.
5. Martin Kenner and James Petras, eds., *Fidel Castro Speaks* (New York: Grove Press, 1969), 74.

6. Thomas C. Wright, *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution*, revised ed. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 23.
7. www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights.
8. Lee Lockwood, *Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990), 160.
9. William Taubman, *Kruschev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 427.
10. The difference between official and black market exchange rates precludes accurately translating Cuban pesos into U.S. dollars.

10

The Cuban Revolution, Latin America, and the United States

“January 1, 1959, when Fidel Castro triumphed, began a new era in Latin America.”¹ So wrote Herbert Matthews, the *New York Times* reporter, three years after he interviewed Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra. Indeed, for the next three decades, the Cuban Revolution was a primary driving force of Latin American politics. Castro’s revolution ignited a wave of revolutionary activity that shook the Latin American status quo to its core, posed unprecedented levels of threat to the elites, and caused the United States to take extraordinary measures to protect its interests in the region.

In addition to concrete accomplishments and seductive style, the Cuban Revolution’s timing was another major factor in its impact. The late 1950s to early 1960s was a period of democratic governance in Latin America second only to the period from 1990 to the present; after the fall of several authoritarian regimes in the 1950s, only six of the region’s smaller countries were not governed in a reasonably democratic manner. As a result, media censorship was minimal, and freedom to demonstrate, strike, and organize new political groups, including pro-Castro parties and factions, was optimal in most of the hemisphere. The recent advent of the cheap transistor radio, which even most of the poor could afford, meant that the illiterate masses and those beyond the reach of electricity were able to learn about the revolution in Cuba and be inspired by it. Those with access to television were likely to be even more impressed.

FIDELISMO

While launching the revolutionary measures that would thoroughly transform the island, Castro simultaneously called for revolution throughout Latin America, famously threatening to “convert the cordillera (range) of the Andes to the Sierra

Maestra of the hemisphere.”² Within months of coming to power, he aided exile attacks on several dictatorships. Over the following years, he invited thousands of Latin Americans to visit the island, converting many into advocates of Cuban-style revolution. He established training facilities in Cuba for potential guerrilla fighters and funneled aid to leftist groups throughout Latin America.

The positive accomplishments in Cuba, the style of the revolution, Castro’s repeated calls to arms, and the technology and relative freedom to reach out to most Latin Americans created a climate favorable to the rise of an unprecedented wave of revolutionary activity. Herbert Matthews described this as “something new, exciting, dangerous, and infectious [that] has come into the Western Hemisphere with the Cuban Revolution.”³ That “something” was *fidélismo*. *Fidélismo* amounted to acute impatience with the status quo combined with the attitude that revolution should be pursued immediately; no excuses. As Castro put it in his 1962 Second Declaration of Havana, “The duty of every revolutionary is to make the revolution,” and he meant *now*.⁴

As the example of Cuba drove up demands for change, the political agenda in most Latin American countries shifted leftward, *fidélista* groups and publications proliferated, street demonstrations and strikes multiplied, and walls blossomed with the slogan “Cuba sí, Yánqui no.” Under the impact of the Cuban Revolution, the political party landscape changed: The more progressive elements of mainstream reformist parties such as Venezuela’s Acción Democrática (Democratic Action) and Peru’s Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) became disillusioned with reformism and broke away, forming their own *fidélista* groups; the Communist parties, wedded to gradualism and caution, also spun off numerous, often competing *fidélista* factions. Guerrilla movements were launched in Guatemala, Venezuela, Peru, and elsewhere, and existing rural guerrilla groups in Colombia embraced *fidélismo*.

Of all the measures that transformed Cuba, agrarian reform resonated most loudly. Over half of the Latin American population in 1960 was rural, and most were landless in countries dominated by large landed estates. The revolutionary transformation of Cuban rural society thus had enormous appeal to the land-starved of the hemisphere. In several countries, landless campesinos mobilized for land reform, in some cases driving out landowners and occupying their estates; the Brazilian *Ligas Camponesas* (peasant leagues) in particular constituted a major threat to the status quo.

The unprecedented degree of radicalization and mobilization threatened the stability and even the survival of civilian governments in several countries. As military commanders nervously watched pressures for change mount and civilian governments blunder or equivocate in dealing with the rise of *fidélismo*, they exercised their traditional tutelary role by cracking down on pro-Castro groups and overthrowing and replacing half a dozen governments by 1963. In 1964, the Brazilian military overthrew President João Goulart, whom it accused of *fidélista* leanings, and established a dictatorship that lasted twenty-one years and served as precedent for state terrorist regimes in Chile, Uruguay, and Argentina (Chapter 11).

U.S. RESPONSES

Fidel Castro's takeover in Cuba opened a new and dangerous theater in the Cold War, and the United States responded to the threat in a variety of ways. One thrust of U.S. policy was to bring down the Castro regime. As we have seen, the United States applied economic pressure culminating in the formal trade embargo and attempted to topple Castro militarily in the Bay of Pigs invasion. The United States honored its pledge to Moscow not to invade the island, but tried to provoke uprisings against Castro and carried out various attempts on his life. Murder plots against Castro involved poison in pens, cigars, and even a diving suit that he used. The most bizarre of the attempts to provoke rebellion involved announcing the second coming of Christ and simultaneously having a U.S. submarine surface off the coast to set off fireworks, prompting a spontaneous uprising against the anti-Christ, Castro. A CIA operative called this "elimination by illumination." But the greater challenge to U.S. policymakers was how to prevent radical, Marxist revolution from spreading beyond Cuba.

The United States followed three basic approaches to containing Castro's revolution. One of these was to isolate Cuba within the framework of the OAS (Organization of American States) where the United States exercised disproportionate influence. Arguing that the 1954 Declaration of Caracas (Chapter 8) required sanctioning Cuba for its embrace of Communism, the United States escalated pressure on the member states beginning with a failed 1960 initiative condemning Cuba. But as more Latin American governments were rocked by the impact of *fidélismo* and several were replaced by hard-line military regimes, U.S. pressure began to work. The culmination was a 1964 OAS resolution requiring all member states to break diplomatic relations and suspend all transportation and travel between their countries and Cuba; only Mexico refused to comply. Thus, Cuba lost the convenience of a physical presence in Latin America's capitals and the immunity afforded its diplomats, while the travel restrictions discouraged all but the most committed from visiting the island. But isolation did little to reduce the most important influence that the Cuban Revolution exercised: the power of its example.

President John F. Kennedy unveiled a second response to the threat of Pan-Latin American revolution at an OAS meeting at Punta del Este, Uruguay, in August 1961. The Alliance for Progress, a U.S.-financed plan to promote structural change in Latin America, was designed to compete with the allure of Cuban-style revolutionary change. The Alliance called on Latin American governments to strengthen democracy, implement social justice, and accelerate economic development to reduce poverty—in other words, to replicate the Cuban Revolution's accomplishments but within a framework of political democracy. The Alliance's goals included annual economic growth of at least 2.5 percent per capita, tax reform, the elimination of adult illiteracy, and investment in health services and housing. Recognizing the great appeal of Cuba's agrarian reform to Latin America's rural landless population, the Alliance called for the "effective transformation . . . of unjust structures and systems of land tenure."⁵ But asking Latin America's elites to give up their large landed estates,



Alliance for Progress postage stamp

Source: Library of Congress

pay higher taxes, and jeopardize their power by expanding democracy proved to be a chimera. Rather than pursue reform and give up their prerogatives, the elites and their military allies embraced the third U.S. response to the threat of hemispheric revolution: the military option.

The United States' post-World War II military strategy for Latin America, imbedded in the 1947 Rio de Janeiro Treaty, was based on the concept of collective hemispheric security against aggression by the Soviet Union. But with the rise of Cuban-inspired domestic unrest that threatened to destabilize governments, the U.S. focus shifted—in the words of Robert McNamara, President Kennedy's secretary of defense—to combating “internal subversion designed to create dissidence and insurrection.”⁶ To meet this challenge, the United States doubled military aid to Latin America and initiated training in counterinsurgency warfare. Instructed by U.S. Green Berets at the School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone, which became notorious for producing dictators and death squad leaders, and at bases in the United States, Latin American officers learned to fight using the guerrillas' own tactics: living in and off of the jungle, setting traps and ambushes, and engaging in hand-to-hand combat when necessary. Organized into elite units and instilled with a special esprit de corps, these highly trained forces often had the advantage of helicopters for rapid deployment; the latest in sophisticated, lightweight weapons; and new technologies such as infrared aerial photography that could remotely detect even small guerrilla units.

U.S. training went well beyond preparing elite units to fight guerrillas. In both formal classroom settings and informal after-hours socialization in officers' clubs, U.S. personnel indoctrinated their Latin American counterparts in the anti-leftist, anti-Communist National Security Doctrine, a concept that reoriented military thinking away from external defense toward fighting the enemy within. This enemy was not just guerrillas, but included a much broader category of “subversives.”

Officers were taught that Marxists and other *fidelistas* infiltrated society and lurked in political parties, schools, labor unions, the mass media, the professions, and in the progressive “liberation theology” wing of the Catholic Church (see below). As portrayed during the McCarthy era in the United States, these subversives were not only disloyal to their country, but were also amoral, devious, clever, and capable of taking over existing organizations for their own nefarious purposes. An Argentine army report from the early 1960s reflected this thinking: “The enemy is tremendously dangerous. We are not attacked from outside . . . but subtly undermined through all channels of the social fabric.”⁷⁷ Indoctrination in National Security Doctrine would culminate in the state terrorist regimes of the 1970s and 1980s (Chapter 11).

RURAL GUERRILLA WARFARE

Guerrilla warfare took its name from the response to Napoleon Bonaparte’s 1808 invasion of Spain (Chapter 2) when, after the defeat of Spain’s army, Spanish irregulars harassed and skirmished with Napoleon’s army for several years. “Little war” (*guerra*, or war, modified by the diminutive) was not new in 1808: It was a strategy as old as the earliest use of unorthodox methods of fighting by weaker groups against regular armies. Prior to Castro’s victory, Latin America had experienced guerrilla warfare during the independence movements, the 1910 Mexican Revolution, and Augusto César Sandino’s fight against the U.S. Marines in Nicaragua. But it was the Cuban Revolution that popularized guerrilla warfare and made it the preferred method of insurrection.

Guerrilla warfare in Latin America has been inextricably associated with Ernesto “Che” Guevara. Although Castro led the successful guerrilla insurrection, Che wrote the book, penned additional tracts on the topic, and died leading the highest profile guerrilla campaign after Cuba’s. Published in 1960, the year after Castro came to power, Guevara’s best-selling *Guerrilla Warfare* broke no new theoretical ground. Rather, it is primarily a “how-to” manual claiming to be based on the Cuban experience. It describes the organization, training, supply, and operation of a guerrilla unit and is full of homilies on the physical and spiritual requirements for guerrilla fighters; advice on selecting weapons, shoes, and knapsacks; instructions for fighting the army; and descriptions of the progressive stages through which the guerrilla force should evolve on its pathway to victory.

The true importance of Che’s book and subsequent writings was their validation of the Cuban method as the correct approach for insurrection in Latin America. *Guerrilla Warfare* reduced the lessons of the Cuban insurrection to three axioms: “1) Popular forces can win a war against the army; 2) It is not necessary to wait until all conditions for revolution exist; the insurrection can create them; 3) In underdeveloped America, the countryside is the basic area for armed fighting.”⁷⁸ The first point countered the well-founded belief that the day of caudillo uprisings was over, that only modern armies could overthrow a government. The second addressed Latin

America's Communists, who rejected revolutionary action because, according to established doctrine, the objective condition of heavy industrialization and, consequently, a large and oppressed proletariat had not yet been met in Latin America. The third axiom reinforced the Cuban guerrillas' conviction that they deserved all the credit for defeating Batista, regardless of the role of the urban resistance.

While clearly encouraging Latin Americans to pursue guerrilla warfare, Che also warned that the struggle would be long and hard, even predicting that "many shall perish" in the cause of revolution. He admitted that the Cuban guerrillas had had advantages that later followers of the model would not enjoy, among them the "telluric force called Fidel Castro" and the fact that the Cuban elites and the United States, caught off guard, had not anticipated a guerrilla victory and subsequent revolution.⁹ Yet, Che was not entirely candid in his message to would-be guerrillas: As often occurs when the victors in a struggle write the history, they claim a disproportionate amount of credit for success. Explicit in his writings is the idea that the guerrillas alone were responsible for the victory. This argument omits the fact that without the fierce urban resistance that tied Batista's forces down and allowed Castro's guerrilla force to develop virtually unopposed in the Sierra Maestra, Fidel Castro would likely be but a footnote in Cuban history. While stating that "the struggles of the city masses of organized workers should not be underrated," *Guerrilla Warfare* devotes no more than 2 percent of its text to the so-called external front, or the urban resistance which, it adds, must be subordinate to the rural guerrilla leadership.¹⁰ Thus in lionizing the rural guerrillas and denigrating the contributions of the urban fighters, Che not only distorted the history of the anti-Batista struggle, but also presented a flawed model to the revolutionaries of Latin America—one that would lead many to their deaths.

A rash of guerrilla actions broke out in the first couple of years following Castro's victory. These were quixotic ventures mounted by idealists who thought that packing a gun and a sandwich and heading for the jungle would bring victory. By 1962, better conceived and organized guerrilla movements appeared in several countries. Combating these insurrections required major governmental commitments of resources and troops, and while insurgencies in Venezuela and Peru were readily defeated, the Guatemalan guerrillas continued to fight until 1996. In Colombia, rural conflict reaching back to the late nineteenth century had been rekindled by political developments in the 1940s, resulting in a phenomenon known as La Violencia. Under the impact of the Cuban Revolution, the two main guerrilla groups—the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)—embraced *fidelismo* and revolutionary objectives. While never threatening to topple the national government, the Colombian guerrillas took control of large amounts of territory and continued fighting well into the twenty-first century.

While these guerrilla movements failed to overthrow governments and carry out revolutions, the authority on guerrilla warfare remained deskbound in Cuba, serving

first as president of the National Bank and then, from 1961 to 1965, as minister of industry. Frustrated by the failure of Castro's industrialization initiative and by the Latin American guerrillas' lack of success, Che left Cuba in 1965 to pursue his true vocation as a revolutionary fighter. After spending a few months with guerrillas in the Congo—another frustrating experience—he returned to Cuba in March 1966, ready to launch a plan that he and Castro had been developing.

At this point, after seven years of vigorously promoting revolution in Latin America, Castro and Guevara could claim no successes; indeed, the prospects for revolution appeared to be dimming. But true to his character and consistent with his past behavior, Castro responded to adversity by setting a truly maximalist goal: continent-wide, even worldwide revolution. He and Che reasoned that with the United States' deepening involvement in Vietnam—nearly two hundred thousand troops by the end of 1965 and growing—the outbreak of revolutionary movements throughout the developing world could further tie down U.S. military forces, eventually stretching them to the breaking point and thus dealing a death blow to what they saw as Yankee imperialism. Che called this breathtakingly ambitious plan “two, three, or many Vietnams.” To develop support for his initiative, Castro convened progressive governments and movements from Latin America, Africa, and Asia in the January 1966 Tricontinental Congress.

The Latin American part of the global plan was an extension of the Cuban guerrilla experience. After seventeen months of training and building his forces in the Sierra Maestra, Castro had opened a second front under his brother Raúl, and later two additional fronts in central Cuba—a strategy that led to victory. Castro and Guevara planned to replicate that successful strategy on a much grander scale: Che would launch a guerrilla movement, staffed by veteran Cuban fighters, that would attract revolutionaries from throughout Latin America. After training with the master, those revolutionaries would return to their countries and establish new fronts in a Pan-Latin American guerrilla war.

Despite some well-founded misgivings, the two men settled on Bolivia as the site of the initial guerrilla movement, largely for its strategic value to the continental revolution. Bolivia shares porous borders with five countries, a situation that could facilitate the coming and going of foreign fighters. The principal concern about selecting Bolivia derived from the 1952–1953 Bolivian Revolution. As we have seen (Chapter 8), most of the Indian peasantry received land through direct seizures and the 1953 agrarian reform law. Thus, the promise of agrarian reform that would attract the support of landless peasants was essentially irrelevant to the bulk of Bolivia's rural population. But the fundamental objective of the Bolivian operation was not to carry out another revolution in that country, but to use some area of Bolivia to train foreign guerrillas for the continent-wide revolution.

Che Guevara entered Bolivia disguised as a Uruguayan businessman in November 1966. Advised by an advance party that had scouted locations, he purchased an isolated large farm in the lightly populated rugged hills of Santa Cruz province

for his training site. As the Cubans and a few Bolivians arrived at the site, training proceeded as anticipated for the first month; but soon, the venture disintegrated into a dismal failure culminating in defeat and death ten months later. Che's Bolivian diary and those kept by three Cuban fighters tell a tale of serious miscalculation and disregard for the most basic rules of guerrilla warfare. As the story developed, it seemed as though Che had forgotten everything he had written in his guidebook, *Guerrilla Warfare*.

The terrain of the area chosen for the mission was difficult. Rather than jungle, where a leafy canopy would provide cover for the guerrillas, it was hilly and covered with low, thick, spiny vegetation that required the constant use of machetes for passage. *Guerrilla Warfare* addresses "unfavorable terrain," indicating that guerrillas can compensate for it by possessing "extraordinary mobility" or being able to cover eighteen to thirty miles per day.¹¹ From its first training march, which took twice as long as planned, the band learned that it could cover but a fraction of that distance on good days and almost nothing in the toughest terrain. Upon returning to the farm, Che and his men found that the Bolivian army had discovered their base. Rattled by that breach, Che decided to begin combat immediately, violating his fundamental rule that the guerrillas establish a liberated zone before engaging in full-scale fighting. While the guerrillas won a few skirmishes, they were quickly put on the defensive. The terrain soon took another toll: In April 1967, the guerrillas—numbering around fifty—accidentally split and never reunited, disoriented by the harsh and unfamiliar landscape.

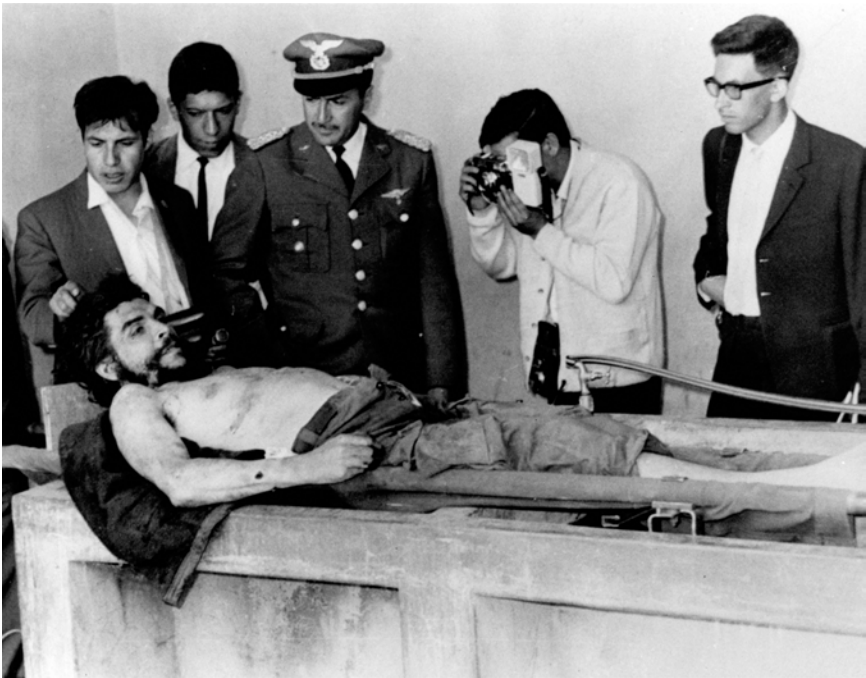
Although Che's book deprecated the urban resistance, it did recognize that "external" help for the guerrillas could be useful. In Bolivia, Che received little cooperation from the Communists and *fidelistas* who might have collaborated. Not only was the Bolivian left fragmented and at war with itself, but because of the predominance of Cubans in the guerrilla unit and Che's insistence on commanding the operation, it supplied few recruits and no supplies. The heavy Cuban presence also allowed the Bolivian government to depict the guerrillas as a foreign invasion force and rally support for their defeat.

Guerrilla Warfare tells its readers that "a good supply system is of basic importance" and emphasizes the need for proper equipment, clothing, and medicines.¹² In contrast to Castro's band in the Sierra Maestra, which received supplies from M-26-7 operatives in Santiago, Che had no reliable source of supplies. The men's shoes fell apart, their clothing was shredded by the spiny vegetation, and they had to improvise in order to eat, once being reduced to "a condor and a rotten cat."¹³ Che had been asthmatic all his life; in Bolivia, he lost his medication and could hardly function, reducing the group's already limited mobility. Soon, rather than fighting, the group was forced to focus on surviving.

According to *Guerrilla Warfare*, "full help from the people of the area" was also essential to guerrilla success.¹⁴ Yet Che was unable to recruit a single peasant. In fact, peasants often abandoned their homes at the guerrillas' approach and, Che believed, informed the military of their presence and movements. Several factors

explained this contrast with Castro's success in recruiting peasant support in the Sierra Maestra. There was no land shortage in the area where the guerrillas operated, so the promise of agrarian reform was irrelevant. The Cubans comprising much of the land looked and sounded foreign, raising peasant suspicion and mistrust. Finally, while the Cubans had prepared by studying Quechua, one of the two major Bolivian Indian languages, the population where the guerrillas operated spoke another native language, Guaraní.

The guerrillas' downward spiral continued as men drowned in the swift rivers of the region, others deserted, communication with Havana was lost, and morale plummeted. By September 1967, Che faced a new problem: elite counterinsurgency ranger units of the Bolivian army, quickly created and trained by a U.S. mobile team after Che Guevara's presence in Bolivia was detected. Che noted in his diary's summary for September: "Now the Army appears to be more effective in its actions."¹⁵ Rangers closed in and destroyed one of the two guerrilla groups in late August. They pinned down the remainder, including Che, on October 8, 1967, killing several and taking the leader captive. Che Guevara was executed the next day by Bolivian army personnel in the presence of CIA operative Félix Rodríguez. The ambitious "two, three, or many Vietnams" strategy died with Che.



Che Guevara's body on display in Bolivia

Source: Associated Press

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Che's death and the failure of his Bolivian mission were heavy blows to Latin American proponents of revolution. Nearly a decade after Castro came to power, they counted no victories, only defeats. But the cause of revolution was not dead: Shortly after the Bolivian debacle, new currents of revolution surfaced, again placing the United States and Latin America's elites on the defensive.

One of these new currents was liberation theology, a movement within the Catholic Church based on doctrines that emerged from the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) of 1962–1965 and the Conference of Latin American Bishops held at Medellín, Colombia, in 1968. Vatican II called for a realignment of the church from its traditional alliance with the elites to solidarity with the poor in seeking a more just world. The Latin American bishops fleshed out this principle, arguing that the church should embrace a “preferential option for the poor.” They called for the formation of “Christian base communities” headed by priests and committed laypersons where the poor would be taught literacy by reading the bible and organized to seek improved material conditions. Embracing an alternate vision of the change that the Cuban Revolution offered, many priests and laypersons began working and living among the poor and downtrodden.

Conservatives inside and outside of the church considered liberation theology and its practitioners subversive. They viewed writings by leading liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez denouncing “private ownership of the means of production” as synonymous with Marxism. The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, under the direction of future Pope Benedict XVI, denounced liberation theology for using “concepts uncritically borrowed from Marxist ideology.”¹⁶ But liberation theology's real threat to the status quo was not words; it was the focus of its practitioners on the millions of marginalized persons inhabiting the teeming slums that had proliferated in Latin America's cities and the impoverished rural landless. Although nonviolent, liberation theology appeared as dangerous to the status quo as some of the currents of armed revolution.

URBAN GUERRILLA WARFARE: URUGUAY'S TUPAMAROS

Che Guevara's demise and the failure of the maximalist scheme of continental revolution provoked a reexamination of the rural guerrilla approach to insurrection. Of the few new rural guerrilla movements launched after Che's demise, only two became serious fighting forces that required major efforts to defeat: the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, FMLN) of El Salvador and the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) in Peru. But rather than abandon guerrilla warfare altogether, revolutionaries in southern South America re-invented the approach and applied it to their heavily urbanized countries that lacked the combined mountain and jungle terrain ideal for rural guerrilla warfare. As one

leader put it, without urban insurrection, “those countries lacking the geographic conditions favorable to rural guerrilla warfare . . . would have to discard armed struggle in the process of a revolution.”¹⁷

The original urban guerrillas were the Tupamaros, the Uruguayan fighters named for the gaucho bands that fought in the independence wars—who in turn had been named for the most famous Indian rebel during the Spanish colonial period, Tupac Amaru. Uruguay—a small country of 68,000 square miles and a 1970 population of three million—is mostly flat, largely devoted to pasture, and has the least hospitable terrain in all of Latin America for rural guerrillas. Despite its economy based on meat and wool exports, in 1970, it was Latin America’s second most urbanized country, after Argentina, with 80 percent of its population living in cities and towns and fully half in Montevideo, a city of 1.5 million. A Tupamaro observed: “We have a big city with more than three hundred square kilometers of buildings, which allows for the development of an urban struggle.”¹⁸

The Tupamaros faced a formidable challenge because Uruguay, along with Chile and Costa Rica, was a bastion of democratic, constitutional government in Latin America. It boasted a tradition of fair and regular elections, broad participation, a stable two-party system, and well-developed individual liberties. Since the time of José Batlle y Ordoñez (Chapter 5), it had been Latin America’s most advanced social welfare state. What the Tupamaros hoped to exploit was the stagnation of the economy, which by the 1960s had resulted in inflation, rising unemployment, deterioration of middle- and working-class living standards, growth of a marginalized sector of slum dwellers, and increasing labor unrest.

Realizing the impossibility of a successful rural guerrilla war in Uruguay, the Tupamaros began organizing even prior to Che’s death. They developed a reputation as romantic, benign revolutionaries based on their initial restraint and on their Robin Hood-style actions to benefit the poor, such as the Christmas Eve hijacking of a food truck and distribution of its cargo in the slums. Led by leftist union organizer Raúl Sendic, the Tupamaros built a diverse force of middle-class professionals and students as well as workers and even members of the armed forces, all of whom led apparently normal lives apart from their clandestine activities. As their numbers grew, they developed an elaborate organization based on a series of columns of thirty to fifty people, divided into small cells of five to ten members designed to operate independently in the case of the column leaders’ capture or death. They also established an infrastructure of supply networks, safe houses, underground clinics equipped for emergency surgery, and support committees.

By 1968, the Tupamaros moved beyond their Robin Hood stage and began kidnapping officials and attacking police stations, drawing their first blood in July 1969. That same year, they established a clandestine radio station and staged “Operation Pando,” the capture of a town of fifteen thousand which they held for several hours while robbing banks and haranguing the population. While continuing their other activities, by November 1969, the Tupamaros began dispensing justice: They placed captives in their “People’s Prison” and held trials of officials implicated in

counterinsurgency activities, including U.S. citizen Dan Mitrione, a counterinsurgency trainer whom they eventually executed after a planned prisoner exchange fell through. The government responded with crackdowns and the formation of death squads that pursued not only the guerrillas but leftists in general. By 1970, the future of Uruguay was in doubt as the guerrillas, numbering in the hundreds, achieved what observers called “strategic equilibrium” with the government.

After two years of fluctuating fortunes, the tide turned against the Tupamaros in 1972 when the government declared a “state of internal war,” suspended civil liberties, and launched building-to-building searches in an effort to isolate the guerrillas and force them out of their safe houses. Combined with information extracted from a rebel leader under torture, this approach soon bore fruit. Government forces

Uruguay Today Fact Box





Area: 68,037 square miles

Population: 3,341,893

Population growth rate: 0.27%

Urban population: 95.3%

Ethnic composition: white 88%, mestizo 8%, and black 4%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 47.1%, Protestant 11.1%, nondenominational 23.2%, Jewish 0.3%, and atheist or agnostic 17.2%

Life expectancy: 77 years

Literacy: 98.5%

Years of schooling (average): 16 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$21,500

Percentage of population living in poverty: 18.6%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 34.4% and lowest 1.9%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 1.95%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 59.0%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

discovered the People's Prison in May 1972 and by July had found seventy safe houses, captured over six hundred guerrillas, and killed one hundred more. On September 1, they wounded and captured leader Raúl Sendic, and while a few guerrilla actions continued, the Tupamaros were essentially defeated. Despite their success, the military cracked down on civilian politicians and labor unions, and in June 1973 carried out a coup that led to the establishment of a state terrorist regime (Chapter 11).

Though ultimately defeated, the Tupamaros helped revive the stalled momentum of revolutionary insurrection in Latin America. They inspired emulation in Brazil and especially in Argentina, where a powerful urban guerrilla insurgency emerged beginning in 1969. The Tupamaro insurrection was the most promising, or threatening, since Castro's in Cuba. Its defeat required draconian measures, and it cost Uruguayans eleven years of harsh military dictatorship.

PERU: A MILITARY REVOLUTION

Despite the powerful impact of the Cuban Revolution, only three revolutionary governments came to power in Latin America following Castro's takeover in Cuba. The success of counterinsurgency operations against rural guerrilla movements and the urban guerrillas that succeeded them, the effectiveness of National Security Doctrine in preparing the armed forces for repression, and the gradual waning of Cuba's power to inspire revolutionary activity largely accounted for Castro's failure to achieve his goal of Pan-Latin America revolution. And owing to both internal resistance and U.S. pressure or outright intervention, none of the revolutionary regimes—the Revolutionary Government of the Armed Forces in Peru (1968–1975), the Salvador Allende government in Chile (1970–1973), and the Sandinista government in Nicaragua (1979–1990)—was able to finish the revolution that it started.

The Peruvian military government, headed by General Juan Velasco Alvarado, carried out reforms amounting to a revolution. Prior to the 1968 coup that brought it to power, the military had given little evidence of a commitment to radical change; indeed, its primary political role since the 1920s had been to uphold elite dominance by preventing the reformist APRA (Chapter 6) from taking power. While Latin America had experienced a few progressive military governments and civilian governments led by military men in the twentieth century, including the Toro and Busch regimes in Bolivia and Perón's administration in Argentina (Chapter 8), the Latin American military stance in the era of the Cuban Revolution was decidedly reactionary. Thus, the military government in Peru was an anomaly.

Peru in the 1960s was clearly susceptible to revolution. The social structure that thinkers such as González Prada and José Carlos Mariátegui (Chapter 6) had denounced was still intact. Forty percent of the country's ten million people spoke only native languages, over half were illiterate, and millions of Indian peasants were land-starved while large estates dominated the countryside. Large U.S. corporations—including Cerro de Pasco Corporation, the Grace Company, and International Petroleum Company (IPC)—had

dominated the economy since the early twentieth century (Chapter 6). Peru reflected the impact of the Cuban Revolution in various ways: increased demonstrations and strikes, creation of *fidelista* groups and parties, guerrilla movements launched in 1963 and 1965, and Indian occupations of haciendas in the Andes.

Peru Today Fact Box





Area: 496,225 square miles

Population: 30,444,999

Population growth rate: 0.97%

Urban population: 78.6%

Ethnic composition: Amerindian 45%; mestizo 37%; white 15%; and black, Chinese, Japanese, and other 3%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 84.1%, Protestant 12.5%, and none 2.9%

Life expectancy: 73.48 years

Literacy: 94.5%

Years of schooling (average): 13 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$12,200

Percentage of population living in poverty: 25.8%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 36.1% and lowest 1.4%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 1.28%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 40.9%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

Botched negotiations between the government of Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1963–1968) and IPC over the corporation's legal status and exploitation rights sparked the coup that launched the revolution. A leaked copy of the agreement revealed major concessions to the company—the number one symbol of Yankee imperialism in Peru—and damaged the Belaúnde government beyond repair. When it overthrew Belaúnde on October 3, 1968, the military immediately nationalized IPC and named its state-owned successor Petroperú.

Given the circumstances, the expropriation of IPC was not unexpected, but the Velasco government's succeeding actions shocked Peruvians and foreigners alike. In contrast to the general Latin American military resistance to revolution, the Peruvian armed forces embraced and led the revolution. What was different about Velasco and his military colleagues? In fighting the recent guerrilla insurgencies, the military became keenly aware of the socioeconomic conditions plaguing Peru's rural majority. Courses on Peruvian reality offered to the officer corps by progressive academics reinforced that lesson. And the driving forces behind the regime's policies were colonels, who were less wedded than their superiors to the military's traditional role of guardian of the status quo. Thus rather than focusing on repression, the Peruvian military carried out structural reforms designed to preempt Cuban-style revolution.

The revolution really began on June 24, 1969, when Velasco announced a sweeping agrarian reform law that he said “will end forever an unjust social order.”¹⁹ Rather than attack the backward Andean haciendas, relics of the colonial period widely condemned for their inefficiency and social injustice, the regime first targeted the irrigated capitalist plantations on the coast that produced important exports of sugar and cotton. In doing so, the military sought to reduce the wealth and power of the Peruvian oligarchy, known as the “forty families,” many of whom were heavily invested in the modern, efficient coastal plantations. Agrarian reform soon reached the Andes, where large tracts of land were turned over to hacienda workers and communal indigenous villages (*ayllus*). Despite mass expropriations of landed estates, the land available for distribution was insufficient to satisfy peasant demand in several areas of the Andes. Still, by 1976, nearly half of Peru's agricultural surface had been distributed and the traditional backward Andean hacienda had largely disappeared.

In 1970, the military government enacted its General Law of Industries, which sought to recast industrial relations and make workers co-owners of the manufacturing plants where they worked. The law required all manufacturing firms with at least six full-time employees to establish an “industrial community” in which workers would incrementally acquire company shares until they achieved 50 percent ownership; in addition, they were to benefit from profit sharing. By offering workers the benefits of ownership, the industrial community was designed to increase productivity as well as dampen class conflict. Despite owners' resistance, by 1974, some three hundred thousand workers were involved in industrial communities.

The 1974 Social Property Law embodied the regime's most complete vision for a new Peru. The blueprint reflected Christian Democratic concepts of communitarianism and drew on Yugoslav practices of worker self-management. The plan

envisioned four economic sectors: the state sector, comprised of nationalized firms in mining, petroleum, and heavy industry; the industrial communities; small privately owned factories and businesses; and a “social property” sector that was to include firms in all areas of the economy, run by workers. This complex formulation was touted as “neither capitalist nor communist.”

The Peruvian military revolution was profoundly nationalistic. It aimed to build a weak state into one capable of overmatching the power of the national oligarchy, to end Peru’s economic and political subservience to the United States, and to transform a society fragmented by race, geography, language, literacy, and income into a true nation. Agrarian reform, the industrial community, and the enactment of the social property concept sought to further all three of these goals.

In addition, Velasco emphasized Peru’s quest for independence from U.S. domination by realigning the country’s foreign policy. He established diplomatic relations with the USSR, Communist China, and despite the OAS prohibition, with Cuba. Peru also joined the Nonaligned Movement, a group of countries that asserted independence from both the U.S. and the Soviet blocs. Velasco refused to compensate IPC for its expropriation, claiming that the corporation owed more in back taxes than it was worth. Most troubling to the U.S. government, the Velasco government signed a trade pact with the USSR involving major supplies of weapons, including MiG jet fighter planes, giving the Soviets their first military presence in Latin America beyond Cuba. The United States ended military aid, and Peru responded by expelling the U.S. military mission. The United States thus faced a unique situation in Peru: a military regime carrying out revolutionary change that, if done by a civilian government, would have resulted in forceful U.S. intervention—as would occur in Chile and Nicaragua.

The military government addressed the problem of economic dependency in a very innovative way that recognized the need for foreign investment while channeling it in ways beneficial to developing countries. In a 1970 speech, Velasco articulated his view of reciprocity: “We are not a group of weak nations at the mercy of foreign capital. They need our raw materials and our markets. And if we need capital and advanced technology, the evident bilaterality of these needs must lead to new arrangements that protect the present and future interests of Latin America.”²⁰ This concept, known as the Velasco Doctrine, was adopted as policy by the short-lived Andean Pact, a common market comprised of the six Andean countries from Venezuela to Chile.

Under the Velasco Doctrine, foreign capital was invited to invest in needed areas on a temporary, phaseout basis, in partnership with domestic capital where possible. The Andean Pact allowed a maximum annual profit repatriation to the investing company of 14 percent. When the total investment had been recovered, ideally within fifteen years, the majority share of the enterprise would become state property. These regulations would provide necessary capital and technology without requiring the Latin American countries to permanently surrender their resources to foreign interests. The Velasco Doctrine—Latin America’s most comprehensive approach to resolving the colonial legacy of economic dependency—was unable to prove its efficacy as Chile pulled out of the Andean Pact in 1976 and other countries followed.

By 1974, the military revolution was beginning to wind down. Many Peruvians considered the social property concept both extreme and vague, and a decree nationalizing the Lima press caused alarm. Though not particularly repressive, and despite its policies designed to elevate Peru's poor, the Velasco government was unable to institutionalize political support. Serious economic problems surfaced, requiring austerity measures. General Velasco suffered serious health problems and as his condition worsened in 1975, a moderate fellow general, Francisco Morales Bermúdez, led a bloodless coup and replaced him as president. While land distribution continued for a while under Morales, the social property sector was eliminated and the industrial community law was narrowed to only the largest firms. The dream of a new Peru gradually faded, but the 1968–1975 military regime had the distinction of leading one of Latin America's most ambitious and sincere attempts to cope with underdevelopment and social injustice in the twentieth century.

CHILE: REVOLUTION BY THE BALLOT BOX

Along with Uruguay and Costa Rica, Chile had the longest and strongest democratic tradition in Latin America. By the late 1930s, elite political power had declined to the point that parties of the left, center, and right drew roughly comparable numbers of votes in national elections and were fairly evenly represented in Congress. But developments in the mid-1960s unraveled that balance of power as pressure for change mounted.

A country whose rural areas were dominated by great estates, Chile was highly susceptible to the Cuban Revolution's call for agrarian reform. Previously barred from rural areas, urban-based labor and left party cadres redoubled their efforts after 1959 to recruit estate workers into still illegal agricultural unions and to generate demands for agrarian reform. The conservative Jorge Alessandri administration (1958–1964) attempted to preempt the rising demand for land in 1962 by enacting a modest agrarian reform law that did nothing to appease the landless.

Such was the transformation of Chilean politics that both major presidential candidates in 1964 promised revolution. Reformist Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei Montalva was elected in a contest between a socialist revolution, advocated by his rival Salvador Allende, and his own "revolution in liberty." Congressional elections the following year confirmed the leftward movement of the country's political landscape and landowners' loss of their traditional control of their workers' votes. Rather than their normal one-third or more, the right parties won only 7 of 45 seats in the Senate and 9 of 147 in the Chamber of Deputies, leaving them virtually powerless in Congress. Meanwhile, a left-wing anti-system party that embraced violence for taking power, the *Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario* (Movement of the Revolutionary Left, MIR), was founded in 1966 and a year later the Socialist Party, historically a broad-based reformist party, declared itself Marxist–Leninist and, like the MIR, accepted the validity of revolutionary violence. Chile was primed for revolution, but it would not occur by the method that Castro and Che Guevara advocated.



Supporters rally for Salvador Allende, 1964

Source: Library of Congress

Frei's reforms failed to stabilize Chile. His administration enacted an aggressive agrarian reform law and legalized rural unions in 1967, while instituting significant reforms in the urban arena and "Chileanizing," or taking half ownership of the U.S.-dominated copper industry—the main source of Chile's export revenues. To mobilized urban and rural workers, the pace of reform was too slow to satisfy their Cuban-inspired thirst for change, while the elites felt endangered by reforms they considered extreme. The fortunes of the right revived in the 1969 congressional elections in reaction to the Frei reforms, particularly those in the countryside that stripped numerous wealthy families of their traditional estates. Buoyed by its relative success, the right, constituted as the new Partido Nacional (National Party, PN), nominated former President Alessandri as its presidential candidate for 1970. Organized as the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity, UP), a coalition of the Socialist and Communist parties and four small non-Marxist parties, the left nominated Socialist Allende for his fourth presidential campaign. With the Christian Democrat candidate placing third, Allende defeated Alessandri by the narrow margin of 36.5 to 35.2 percent. Thus fueled by the impact of the Cuban Revolution, revolution came to Chile via the ballot box.

Allende's platform was straightforwardly socialist: He promised extensive nationalizations throughout the economy, acceleration of agrarian reform, and income redistribution in order to move Chile as rapidly as possible toward socialism while preserving the country's political democracy. As no other country had transitioned from capitalism to socialism without undergoing a revolutionary insurrection

Chile Today Fact Box





Area: 284,211 square miles

Population: 17,508,200

Population growth rate: 0.82%

Urban population: 89.5%

Ethnic composition: white and nonindigenous 88.9%, Mapuche 9.1%, and other indigenous 1%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 66.7%, Protestant 16.4%, and other or none 16%

Life expectancy: 78.61 years

Literacy: 97.5%

Years of schooling (average): 16 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$23,500

Percentage of population living in poverty: 14.4%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 42.8% and lowest 1.5%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 2.04%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 65.8%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

(Russia, China, and Cuba) or being militarily occupied by a socialist country (Eastern Europe, controlled by the Soviet Union following World War II), the Chilean experiment was closely watched throughout the world. It raised the critical question: “Is there a peaceful road to socialism?”

Having invested heavily to prevent Allende’s election, the U.S. government maneuvered during the two months between the September election and his scheduled inauguration in November to prevent his taking office. As Allende had not won a majority of the vote—the norm in Chile’s multiparty elections—Congress would elect the president; this was traditionally a mere formality, as it had always elected the candidate who received the plurality of the popular vote. Nonetheless, U.S. President Richard Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger, plotted to thwart this Chilean tradition by getting the non-UP congressional majority to deny Allende the presidency, but failed when the Christian Democrats refused to go along. The second part of the two-track strategy sought to foment a military coup to forestall an Allende presidency, but given the Chilean military’s long tradition of nonintervention, this approach likewise failed and Allende donned the presidential sash on November 3, 1970, forewarned of the U.S. government’s hostility.

Early in his administration, Allende promised to deliver “a revolution *a la chilena* with red wine and *empanadas* (meat and onion pies)”—the traditional drink and food consumed by the *pueblo* on festive occasions.²¹ His first year in office lived up to that promise. He reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba in defiance of the 1964 OAS resolution, enacted a series of populist measures to benefit the poor and middle classes, accelerated the agrarian reform that Frei had begun, and nationalized



Richard Nixon and his national security advisor, Henry Kissinger

Source: Library of Congress

the remaining U.S.-owned copper mines without compensation. Facing an obstructionist majority in Congress and a hostile judiciary, he had to be creative in extending state ownership of the economy. He took advantage of the nervousness of capitalists, both foreign and domestic, who were willing to accept low buyout offers for their properties, and used obscure laws to expropriate other industries and businesses, to the point that the state controlled important sectors of the economy within a year. Nonetheless, by that time, there were signs of trouble ahead for Allende and the UP: Nationalizations and populist programs had used up most of Chile's hard currency reserves, the Nixon administration had initiated a credit boycott, and the opposition parties had formed an alliance that opposed the government's every move.

Allende made more progress on his agenda during his second year in office, accelerating the expropriation of Chile's large landed estates while continuing to extend state control over the nonagricultural economy. However, problems mounted: The U.S. government funneled millions of dollars to opposition parties and media through the CIA; Congress refused to approve budgets and began impeaching members of Allende's cabinet; Chile's chronic inflation began to accelerate; and a lengthy visit by Fidel Castro contributed to hardening the opposition's resolve to undermine the government. Constant confrontation led to growing polarization.

Contributing to the country's polarization were a growing mass mobilization and the government's ambivalent response to it. Throughout rural Chile, impatient hacienda workers, often prompted by members of the UP parties or the MIR, seized estates rather than wait for agrarian reform to give them the land. Urban workers likewise occupied dozens of factories and businesses that had not been officially expropriated. This "hypermobilization" of rural and urban workers posed a difficult dilemma for the Allende administration. On one hand, the president had the constitutional responsibility of enforcing the law, which guaranteed private ownership rights barring a valid expropriation order. On the other hand, the workers were Allende's primary constituency, and he was understandably loath to use the force of a "people's" government against the people. The government's response reflected the president's ambivalence: some properties were returned to their owners, while others remained in the workers' hands.

A turning point in Chile's experiment with democratic socialism came in October 1972. The country's large-scale economic associations—including the national societies of agriculture, mining, industry, and commerce—had long acted as lobbyists and pressure groups in the political arena. But in response to President Frei's reforms and the drastic decline in the right-wing parties' representation in Congress following the 1965 election, they took on a larger role in defending their interests. They expanded their membership by recruiting smaller-scale landowners, miners, industrialists, and business owners, while retaining traditional elite control of the organizations.

As their very survival came into question under Allende's program of establishing socialism, the leaders of these organizations, known as *gremios* (or guilds) in Chile, took action. A government project to nationalize the trucking industry led to a truck

owners' strike in October 1972, and the *gremios* launched a mass movement based on strategies borrowed from labor unions and left-wing parties. Subsidized by the CIA, they carried out a "bosses' strike" that created shortages of food and other essentials throughout the country and virtually shut down the economy. Accompanying the strike were "marches of the empty pots" carried out by women in upper-class neighborhoods. The strike lasted a month and was resolved only by a gesture designed to reassure the population that order would be restored: the appointment of three military officers to Allende's cabinet.

Both the UP and the opposition placed their hopes for a resolution of the growing bitterness and polarization in the March 1973 congressional election. The UP aspired to gain a majority and thus have a Congress supportive of the president's agenda, while the right-wing National Party and centrist Christian Democrats hoped for the two-thirds necessary to impeach Allende and remove him from office. But the election resolved nothing: UP candidates received 44 percent of the vote to 56 percent for the opposition. While the UP could take satisfaction in improving on Allende's 36.5 percent in the presidential vote, the election did not end the deadlock with the opposition-controlled Congress. Having failed at the ballot box, some within the opposition decided that more drastic measures were necessary to keep Allende from finishing his six-year term.

In a May 1973 address to Congress, Allende assessed the progress made on his goal of moving Chile toward socialism: 3,570 rural properties expropriated, leaving few that exceeded the legal limit on size; two hundred of the country's largest enterprises nationalized, accounting for 30 percent of national production; and 90 percent of banks and a third of wholesale distribution under government ownership. But the UP could take little satisfaction from that report, as conditions continued to deteriorate. Beset by runaway inflation, mounting deficits, and shortages of essential goods, the economy was approaching collapse. Street violence, incidents of sabotage and assassination, the rise of a right-wing militia, and the creation of neighborhood vigilance patrols reflected the growing instability that was undermining Chile's democratic foundations. By June, the sense of crisis was so palpable that a limited military uprising broke out; although easily suppressed, it put Chileans on notice that the military's tradition of nonintervention hung in the balance.

Again with covert U.S. support, the *gremios* launched a second bosses' strike on July 25, 1973, this time intending to destabilize the country and force the military to act. By August, the only thing standing between Allende and a coup was army commander General Carlos Prats, a firm constitutionalist and upholder of the noninterventionist tradition. Increasingly isolated within the military establishment, Prats resigned on August 22 after officers' wives scattered chicken feed on his lawn. The same day, the Chamber of Deputies of the National Congress issued a thinly veiled call for military intervention. Allende replaced Prats with General Augusto C. Pinochet, who dutifully took the oath to uphold the Constitution. As conditions continued to deteriorate, Allende decided on September 10 to hold a plebiscite on whether he should continue in office or resign. However,

before he could announce the plebiscite, the army under General Pinochet along with the navy, air force, and national police rose in a bloody coup, cut short the Chilean experiment, and provided a resounding “no” to the question, “Is there a peaceful road to socialism?”

NICARAGUA: REVOLUTION BY INSURRECTION

Following Che Guevara’s death, the flame of revolution sputtered but was revived by the rise of liberation theology, urban guerrilla war, and the Peruvian and Chilean revolutions. But with the coups against Allende and Velasco, a climate of reaction spread across Latin America. The Pinochet dictatorship in Chile and the military government in Uruguay, both established in 1973, were followed by another state terrorist regime in Argentina in 1976 (Chapter 11), dashing the hopes of revolutionaries. Thus when the Sandinistas took power in Nicaragua in 1979, Fidel Castro and fellow revolutionaries were heartened, while the elites of neighboring Central American countries and the U.S. government were alarmed.

With the exception of Guatemala, which had been unsettled since the 1954 CIA-sponsored invasion and coup, Central America was less affected in the 1960s by the Cuban Revolution than were the larger, more developed countries of South America. Like most of its neighbors, Nicaragua was relatively backward economically and, as a result, had developed few of the social groups, labor and student organizations, and left parties capable of responding to the stimuli coming from Cuba. Moreover, the Somoza family had run the country with an iron fist since 1936, using its National Guard to repress dissidents and maintain control. Yet the Cuban Revolution had an early and direct impact on Nicaragua that in the long run would bring revolution to power.

Like many Latin American leftists, Carlos Fonseca Amador, a member of Nicaragua’s illegal Communist Party, visited Cuba. Impressed by what he saw and discouraged by the Communists’ gradualism, he broke with the party and, with his friends Tomás Borge and Silvio Mayorga, founded the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (Sandinista National Liberation Front, FSLN) in 1961. Named for General Augusto C. Sandino, the hero of the resistance to the U.S. Marines’ occupation of Nicaragua in the 1920s and early 1930s (Chapter 6), the FSLN was Marxist, *fidelista*, and nationalist. It adopted rural guerrilla warfare as its method of insurrection. The Sandinistas discovered through experience what Che Guevara had omitted in his story of the Cuban insurrection: the value of an urban resistance. In contrast to Cuba, in Nicaragua there was little urban resistance to Somoza in the early 1960s, allowing the National Guard to focus on the fledgling FSLN and inflict losses in every encounter. But where other guerrillas failed, the Sandinistas persisted.

A 1972 earthquake that killed ten thousand people and leveled most of Managua is generally credited with weakening the Somoza regime by bringing to light its corruption and venality. Ignoring the victims, the National Guard tended to their own families, openly looted damaged businesses, and sold donated relief supplies. Anastasio

“Tachito” Somoza, the current dictator, added to his personal fortune with enormous profits on land deals and reconstruction. These actions drove down Somoza’s support among the elites and created for the first time a substantial civic opposition, formalized in 1974 as the Unión Democrática de Liberación (Democratic Liberation Union, UDEL) and led by newspaper publisher Pedro Joaquín Chamorro.

Following an extended period of underground recruiting and organizing, the Sandinistas returned to action in a dramatic way that departed from the rural guerrilla script. They captured and held the guests at a 1974 Christmas party hosted by a Somoza cabinet minister until the dictator freed some prisoners, paid a ransom, and agreed to have newspapers publish an FSLN manifesto. This brazen act demonstrated the regime’s vulnerability and led to heightened repression.

Stymied by the repression and frustrated by the slow pace of progress, the Sandinistas soon broke into three factions, each pursuing a different strategy: One continued the rural guerrilla approach, another focused on Managua and the other cities, while the third reached out beyond the original Marxist base for new recruits. Following the January 1978 assassination of UDEL leader Chamorro at the hands of Somoza henchmen, riots and uprisings against the regime broke out across the country. Somoza responded with the full power of the National Guard, including air strikes and the shelling of cities: The regime had gone to war with its own people. Sensing an opportunity for victory, the FSLN factions reunited, recruited substantial numbers of new fighters, and by May 1979 announced a final offensive. President Jimmy Carter unsuccessfully sought Somoza’s resignation so as to find a reliably pro-U.S. replacement. When the dictator finally resigned and fled, his National Guard dissolved and FSLN fighters rolled into Managua on July 19, 1979.



Nicaraguans greet new government junta following Sandinista victory, July 1979

Source: Associated Press

The Sandinista victory belatedly validated the Cuban prescription for insurrection, but with major revisions. Realizing that Che's formula would not work in Nicaragua—that the guerrillas alone were not capable of creating the conditions for revolution—the Sandinistas had taken the time and effort to build a peasant base of support and branched out from the rural guerrilla approach when other opportunities looked promising. After investing eighteen years in their quest for power, they set out to create a new, post-Somoza Nicaragua.

With the National Guard gone, its own Sandinista army intact, and the prestige and popularity it earned from toppling the forty-three-year Somoza dynasty, the FSLN in 1979 was in a position similar to that of Castro following the defeat of Batista: It could take the country in the direction of its choice. It was widely anticipated that the Sandinistas would follow the Cuban path of radical economic and social change and realignment in foreign policy. Contrary to these expectations, the Sandinista revolution embraced moderation. In politics, it followed two central principles: pluralism and participatory democracy. In economic policy, while nationalizing certain sectors, it left over half of the country's assets in the private sector. In social policy, it invested in social programs such as food subsidies, rent controls, public health, education, housing, and social security while creating mass organizations of workers, youth, women, and farmers, along with *Comités de Defensa Sandinista* (Sandinista Defense Committees), loosely modeled on the Cuban *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución*. In foreign policy, the Sandinistas charted a course of nonalignment rather than an alliance with the Communist bloc.

Several factors explain the Sandinistas' relative moderation. In reaching out beyond its original Marxist base in the 1970s, the FSLN incorporated numbers of more pragmatic, less dogmatic members. The revolution's timing was also important: It coincided with a growing skepticism even among Marxists about Soviet-style economics and with the rise of perestroika (economic reforms) in the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc. Based on Cuba's anemic post-1959 economic development, Castro allegedly advised the FSLN to preserve a substantial private economic sector. Finally, unrelenting U.S. pressure under President Ronald Reagan may have influenced the government toward moderation to avoid a return of the U.S. Marines.

While the Sandinistas clearly exercised the strongest influence of any group in the post-Somoza provisional government, they worked with a cross-section of groups including the bourgeois UDEL. Outside the government, opposition to the Sandinistas flourished: Multiple political parties, to the right and left of the Sandinistas, operated openly and legally along with opposition media and the Superior Council of Private Enterprise. This picture was clearly at odds with Reagan's characterization of Nicaragua as a "totalitarian" state.

Moving to institutionalize the post-Somoza political structure, the governing junta called presidential and congressional elections in 1984. The Reagan administration declared in advance that the election would be fraudulent and pressured the right-wing parties to boycott in order to undermine the election's legitimacy. In what

Nicaragua Today Fact Box



Area: 50,336 square miles

Population: 5,907,881

Population growth rate: 1%

Urban population: 58.8%

Ethnic composition: mestizo 69%, white 17%, black 9%, and Amerindian 5%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 58.5%, Protestant 23.2%, and none 15.7%

Life expectancy: 72.98 years

Literacy: 82.8%

Years of schooling (average): no data

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$5,000

Percentage of population living in poverty: 29.6%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 41.8% and lowest 1.4%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 0.63%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 14.5%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

international observers declared a fair election, Sandinista Daniel Ortega was elected president and the FSLN won sixty-one of ninety-six congressional seats while three right-wing and three Marxist parties split the remaining thirty-five.

The final step in institutionalizing the revolution was drafting a constitution. The 1987 constitution was adopted after two years of open meetings around the country and intense deliberation and debate. The document defined Nicaragua as a social democracy based on an elected government, political pluralism, a mixed state-private economy, and nonalignment in foreign affairs. In contrast to Cuba's 1976 constitution, the Nicaraguan enumerated inviolable individual liberties as well as social, economic, and cultural rights. Insofar as the 1987 constitution embodied the goals of the Nicaraguan revolution, it is clear that the country had chosen a new path to the future and a much more moderate one than Castro followed in Cuba.

While retaining a substantial private sector in the economy, the government nationalized some enterprises, primarily in banking, insurance, mining, transportation, and forestry. These changes brought the state sector to around 45 percent of the total—a figure common for Latin America at that time. At least half of the expanded state sector came from the expropriation of Somoza's extensive holdings, which included agricultural land, the national airline, processing and manufacturing plants, urban real estate, and construction firms. Two agrarian reform laws altered Nicaragua's predominantly agricultural economy. By 1988, state holdings accounted for 13 percent of total surface, large private holdings 12 percent, cooperatives

15 percent, and small- and medium-sized producers owned 60 percent of agricultural land. Thus in another contrast with Cuba, peasants and modest farmers held the dominant position in a capitalist agricultural economy.

The Sandinistas' moderation did nothing to shield them and their revolution from the Yankees that Sandino had fought decades earlier. Reagan viewed Nicaragua through Cold War lenses: You were either with us or against us, and the Sandinistas' opening of diplomatic relations with Cuba and the Soviet Union was proof enough for him that the FSLN was a tool of Moscow and Havana. He began financing and organizing the counterrevolutionaries (or Contras)—many of them former members of the Somozas' National Guard—to serve as U.S. proxies in an undeclared war against a country with which the United States retained correct, if chilly, diplomatic relations. He praised the Contras as “freedom fighters” and called them “the moral equivalent of our Founding Fathers.”²² By early 1982, the Contras began attacking from their refuge in Honduras, targeting not only people but also the new rural schools and clinics that were at the heart of the government's social program. Over forty U.S. military exercises were held in neighboring Honduras, with the primary purpose of bringing massive amounts of weapons and supplies into the country which departing U.S. troops left behind for the Contras. After the United States mined Nicaragua's harbors in 1984, Congress balked at financing the war and Reagan turned to illegal means of supporting it, including the bizarre “Iran–Contra affair.” To counter the Contras, who by 1987 had some fifteen thousand fighters in the field, the Nicaraguan government was forced to build up its regular army to sixty thousand troops and create a large militia. This was effective in pushing the Contras back, but it drained the treasury, requiring the government to divert resources from its popular social programs. The war also produced mounting combat casualties, leaving many families grieving and war-weary.

Reagan's proxy war was effective at undermining the initial popular enthusiasm for the revolution. But to ensure that disenchantment would be channeled into anti-Sandinista votes in the 1990 presidential election, the United States openly spent at least \$7.7 million from the congressionally funded National Endowment for Democracy and covertly spent another \$5 million in support of Violeta Chamorro, widow of the publisher whose 1978 murder launched the death spiral of the Somoza regime. The U.S. investment totaled approximately \$8.50 per voter. The dual strategies paid off: Chamorro defeated Ortega, 55 to 41 percent. Just as surely as if the Marines had invaded or the CIA had orchestrated a coup, the United States ended the Sandinista revolution and an experiment in social democracy that, ironically, resembled the desired outcome of the long-dead Alliance for Progress.

The Cuban Revolution's appeal to many Latin Americans led to mass mobilizations and the destabilization and replacement of civilian governments. The United States responded by attempting to prevent revolution from spreading beyond Cuba. After the failure of several guerrilla outbreaks, Che Guevara himself led the ambitious guerrilla venture in Bolivia. Following Che's 1967 death, liberation theology introduced a

new, nonviolent strain of revolution and in South America, revolutionaries adapted guerrilla war to their predominantly urban settings. Despite years of ferment, revolutionary governments took power in only three countries. The governments in Peru, Chile, and Nicaragua implemented transformative policies that brought substantive change, but all three revolutions ended before finishing their work.

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11

The Reaction: Repression and State Terrorism

The wave of revolution spreading from Cuba spawned a potent reaction across Latin America. Fidel Castro's rejection of electoral democracy and his embrace of Communism, with the resulting elimination of civil and political rights, disappointed many Latin Americans who applauded the changes in Cuban society and the island's liberation from U.S. domination. Latin America's wealthy and privileged were keenly aware that their Cuban counterparts had lost their property and status and opted for exile over life under socialism. Committed Catholics were offended by the restrictions that Castro placed on the Catholic Church, which they viewed as persecution. The Latin American armed forces observed with grave concern the dissolution of the Cuban national military and its replacement with Castro's own Rebel Armed Forces. Therefore, the same Cuban Revolution that mobilized many for change engendered in other segments of the population an equally strong determination to fight against the spread of Cuban-style revolution—some to prevent the eclipse of the civil, political, and religious rights suppressed in Cuba, others to preserve their wealth, privileges, and way of life.

As we have seen (Chapter 10), the rise of revolutionary movements in the wake of the Cuban Revolution had a destabilizing effect on Latin America's predominantly elected, civilian governments and compromised their ability to maintain order and preserve their citizens' security. The result in most countries was military intervention. The armed forces had traditionally played dual roles in national life. Their primary role, according to constitutions and laws, was national defense, which under the influence of National Security Doctrine came to mean defense against the internal threat posed by Marxists and other "subversives." Their other role involved national political life. At times, ambitious and self-serving officers—such as

Anastasio Somoza García in Nicaragua, Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, or Fulgencio Batista in Cuba—seized power in pursuit of their own ends; more commonly, officers took power to guide their countries through times of crisis. For example, the armed forces seized power in virtually every country between 1930 and 1932, when the Great Depression caused severe economic dislocations, social tensions, and political instability that existing governments were unable to handle. The threat posed by the Cuban Revolution was far greater: To the elites, it was an existential threat that warranted extreme countermeasures, including repression that in some countries rose to the level of state terrorism.

STATE TERRORISM

State terrorism is one of two varieties of terrorism, the other being terrorism against the state. Based on recent experience, we tend to think of terrorism as actions perpetrated by groups such as the Basque separatist Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). State terrorism and terrorism against the state share essential characteristics. Let us borrow one of the broader, more inclusive definitions of terrorism from among the thousands devised by academics, journalists, and policymakers. According to Frederick H. Gareau, “Terrorism consists of deliberate acts of a physical and/or psychological nature perpetrated on select groups of victims. Its intent is to mold the thinking and behavior not only of these targeted groups, but more importantly, of larger sectors of society that identify [with] or share the view and aspirations of the targeted groups or who might easily be led to do so. The intent of the terrorists is to intimidate or coerce both groups by causing them intense fear, anxiety, apprehension, panic, dread, and/or horror.”¹ Terrorism against the state is designed to force the targeted government to modify its policies, to overthrow that government, or even to destroy the state. The intent of terrorism carried out by the state is to eliminate the people under its control who are considered actual or potential enemies of the regime and to marginalize those not eliminated through creating intense fear.

Governments that marshal the will and resources to defeat or minimize the impact of terrorism directed against them have a strong chance of success; it is much more difficult to oppose terrorism conducted by the state. State terrorism has taken huge tolls in human life and suffering and in numerous cases has succeeded in eliminating or marginalizing the regime’s perceived enemies. The greatest mass killings of civilians in the twentieth century were conducted by state terrorist regimes: Joseph Stalin’s forced starvation and purges and Adolf Hitler’s Holocaust killed millions of people and intimidated potential opponents into silence and passivity.

From the 1960s into the 1990s, much of Latin America was under the control of authoritarian regimes that used moderate to heavy repression in fighting the revolutionary threat generated by the Cuban Revolution. During much of this period, all but two South American countries, Colombia and Venezuela, experienced direct

military rule. In Central America, with the exception of Costa Rica, weak elected governments served at the pleasure of the dominant armed forces. Mexico also experienced heightened repression by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)-controlled civilian government. Authoritarian rule led in some cases to the formal suspension of constitutional guarantees, in others to extraofficial but equally effective suppression of civil and political rights. In most countries, political parties, interest groups, and civic institutions that opposed the policies pursued by these authoritarian regimes were too weak to offer effective resistance. Moreover, as authoritarian rule spread, there were almost no domestic human rights organizations to resist it, and the international human rights lobby that makes a difference today had not yet developed. Thus, repressors had little concern about being held accountable for their crimes, and their victims little hope of relief.

During these three decades, over half of Latin America's people experienced state terrorism for varying periods of time. Seven regimes can be counted as state terrorist. While the use of terrorism against their own citizens and others was a common thread among these state terrorist regimes, there were important variations among them. Indeed, each country's history is unique. More people were murdered in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Peru than in Argentina or Chile, while the state killed still fewer in Brazil and Uruguay. The regimes in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil primarily targeted real or presumed political enemies; while in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Peru, the regimes went beyond political considerations to include class and racial targeting, directed especially at poor peasants and Indians. The terrorist governments of El Salvador, Peru, and Argentina faced serious insurrections, while those of Brazil, Uruguay, and Chile did not; in Guatemala, there was a long-standing but relatively weak insurrection. Military governments conducted the terrorism in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil, while civilian administrations directed, sanctioned, or acquiesced in terrorism by the armed forces in Peru, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Let us briefly examine three of the regimes that adopted state terrorism and then analyze the other four in greater depth.

STATE TERRORISM IN BRAZIL, URUGUAY, AND PERU

A March 1964 coup in Brazil led to the establishment of South America's first state terrorist regime. Beset in the early 1960s by Cuban-inspired worker unrest and a massive peasant mobilization, both supported or tolerated by populist President João Goulart, Brazil became increasingly unstable. The military's action aimed not only to remove Goulart but also to curb the left's influence in the political system. During the next five years, the military shared power with civilian politicians—reserving the presidency for military officers, curtailing the left parties and unions, but maintaining Congress and civilian state governments with restricted powers.

In response to the rise of an urban guerrilla movement in 1969, the military shut down the remaining civilian institutions and began a period of severe repression. In

addition to attacking the guerrillas, the government adopted the strategy of targeting the guerrillas' actual and potential supporters in order to isolate the insurgents. Arbitrary detention, torture, and assassination became standard instruments of government policy in the fight against subversion; in addition to its own police and military, the government sanctioned private death squads. Because the guerrillas were easily defeated, the Brazilian military government did not employ its repressive powers to the full extent possible and by 1974 began to rein in terrorism. But leery of returning the governance to civilians, the military retained power until 1985.

State terrorism in Uruguay began only six months after the military and police had delivered the coup de grace to the Tupamaros, the original Latin American urban guerrilla movement (Chapter 10). Following the defeat of the gravest insurrectionary threat since Castro's victory in Cuba, the Uruguayan officers, following the prescriptions of National Security Doctrine, turned to rooting out the subversives who might share the Tupamaros' values and goals. They began with a "soft" coup in February 1973 and four months later dissolved Congress, replaced it with an advisory council of state, and brought the public administration under military control. Then the military followed the Brazilian pattern by progressively stripping the hybrid civilian-military government of all substantive citizen participation and creating an apparatus of state terrorism to use against the left. As in Brazil, state terrorism exacted a heavy toll in imprisonment, torture, and exile. Yet in terms of deaths and disappearances, the records of the Brazilian and Uruguayan military dictatorships were mild in comparison with those of the other state terrorist regimes.

State terrorism in Peru arose in response to one of the most violent guerrilla insurgencies in Latin America, the only one that institutionalized terrorism against authorities and civilians alike. The Partido Comunista del Perú en el Sendero Luminoso de Mariátegui (Communist Party of Peru in the Shining Path of Mariátegui, or Sendero Luminoso) was established in 1970, during the 1968–1975 Peruvian military revolution (Chapter 10). Despite impressive accomplishments, the government led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado was unable to satisfy rising demands for land in the heavily populated central Andes where agricultural and grazing lands were limited. This is precisely where Abimael Guzmán, a philosophy professor at the University of Huamanga in Ayacucho, founded the Sendero Luminoso. The university's mission was to promote development in the heavily Quechua Indian region by training specialists in agronomy and public health and returning them to their villages to work. This provided Guzmán, the self-proclaimed "Fourth Sword of Marxism," an ideal means of disseminating his doctrine and building a following.

The Sendero Luminoso embraced a radical ideology derived largely from Mao Zedong and Peru's own progressive thinker José Carlos Mariátegui (Chapter 6). Guzmán's plan involved a five-stage insurgency designed to culminate in the siege and fall of Lima, Peru's capital, after which all traces of capitalism would be quickly erased; anyone resisting would be killed. Initiating armed action in 1980, the Sendero Luminoso overran substantial parts of the central Andes, winning new converts but at the same time creating resistance among those opposed to its imposition of a

puritanical reign of terror with strict rules. Violators received barbaric punishments including amputation of limbs and death by stoning, hacking, dynamite, and being boiled alive. In taking charge, moreover, the militants ignored and overturned the village tradition of rule by elders that predated the Spanish conquest. This application of terrorism to the native population would become the Sendero Luminoso's Achilles' heel.

State terrorism met insurgent terrorism when the Peruvian army entered the war in 1983. Sendero Luminoso militants wore no uniforms: They were indistinguishable to outsiders from ordinary villagers and deliberately blended in with them, making it difficult for the army to identify its enemy. This dynamic resulted in many cases of indiscriminate repression, including killings of noncombatant Indians. The army then turned to organizing village self-defense units, untrained and mostly unarmed, to keep the insurgents out; but these patrols were often caught between army and Sendero Luminoso fighters, with disastrous results.

Momentum began to shift in the late 1980s. Building on his relative success in the Andes, Guzmán modified his script and began recruiting and operating in the extensive slums of Lima, which was home to a third of the national population. But Sendero Luminoso brutality there also turned many potential supporters into opponents. Meanwhile, Alberto Fujimori, a Peruvian of Japanese descent, won the 1990 presidential election on the promise of a no-holds-barred approach to the insurgency. He escalated the government offensive, targeting real and potential civilian supporters and sympathizers as well as Sendero Luminoso militants, and the death toll mounted. Then in September 1992, discarded tubes of psoriasis medicine and Marlboro cigarette packets led police to the Lima apartment from which Guzmán directed his movement. Shortly thereafter, the insurgency fizzled.

In Peru, state terrorism defeated insurgent terrorism, but at a high cost. A truth commission reported in 2003 that over sixty-nine thousand persons had been killed or disappeared and presumed dead. Of those, 85 percent lived in six departments (provinces) in the central Andes, 79 percent were rural, and 75 percent spoke Quechua or another indigenous language. The commission found the Sendero Luminoso responsible for 54 percent of the deaths and government forces for most of the rest.

STATE TERRORISM IN CHILE AND ARGENTINA

Chile was subjected to state terrorism during the 1973–1990 military dictatorship dominated by General Augusto Pinochet, and in Argentina it was carried out by the military and police in the 1976–1983 “Dirty War.” The Argentine and Chilean state terrorist regimes shared fundamental objectives and values. The militaries in both countries went far beyond dealing with the immediate threats that motivated their seizures of power. Having overthrown Salvador Allende and the Unidad Popular (Popular Unity, UP) government in Chile, and having reduced the urban guerrillas

essentially to nuisance status in Argentina (see below), the militaries turned to addressing what they considered the root causes of the revolutionary challenges that had emerged from the Cuban Revolution: Marxism, subversion, and in the Argentine case radicalized Peronism. In pursuit of a final solution to these threats, both regimes developed powerful and sophisticated tools for physically eradicating the left, permanently eliminating Marxism, and destroying the political systems that had allowed revolutionary groups to operate and flourish.

Both regimes employed brutal methods of repression using secret detention centers, extensive torture, murder, and disappearance. Both viewed themselves as heroic combatants in defense of the traditional values of family, religion, and fatherland against godless Marxists and subversives, and glorified their actions as saving the *patria*. Both aspired to create neoliberal, free market economies, with differing results. Along with several other like-minded South American governments, the two regimes cooperated in Operation Condor, an armed international anti-left alliance.

Despite the Chilean armed forces' history of nonintervention in politics—a tradition that set them apart from most of their Latin American counterparts—few Chileans were surprised by the September 11, 1973, coup given the extreme polarization, the hardship imposed by the *gremios*' strikes, and the rise of violence (Chapter 10). However, their expectation that the military would follow the standard Latin American coup script—deposing the government with minimal force, exiling some of its leading personnel, stabilizing the country, and overseeing elections to restore civilian governance after a year or two—was a serious miscalculation.

The coup was a shockingly bloody affair. When President Allende refused to leave the historic La Moneda presidential palace, the air force strafed and bombed it, burning a primary symbol of Chilean democracy. After ordering his staff to leave, Allende shot himself to death. On the evening of the coup, the newly formed military junta decreed a state of siege befitting “a state or time of war,” and the air force representative declared it the military's duty to extirpate the “Marxist cancer.”² The junta closed Congress, dissolved the political parties, purged union and university leadership, and imposed strict censorship, thereby eliminating most potential sources of opposition to its rule. The military cashiered pro-Allende officers and threatened the careers of those who did not enthusiastically embrace the unfolding mission of cleansing Chile of all traces of Marxism and subversion. It soon became evident that the military expected to hold power indefinitely and use all means necessary to eliminate the threat of revolution, permanently and completely.

Allende collaborators and supporters, whose political inclinations and affiliations had been perfectly legal until the moment of the coup, became *ex post facto* criminals and enemies of the state. Hundreds of persons associated with the UP government were ordered to turn themselves in; having done nothing illegal from their perspective, many complied to clear their names and were never seen again. Massive roundups of UP supporters filled soccer stadiums, military installations, navy ships, and other improvised detention sites where hundreds were tortured and killed. Hastily formed military tribunals sentenced scores of enemies of the new state to death.



La Moneda presidential palace under attack during 1973 coup

Source: Associated Press

In rural areas, former landowners settled scores with their former workers who had acquired hacienda lands through agrarian reform.

Despite the censorship, photos and reports circulated around the world depicting bodies lying in streets and floating in rivers, long lines of prisoners chained together, and a grim General Pinochet looking sinister in dark glasses. While the Nixon administration embraced the new regime, the United Nations and governments from around the world condemned the coup and the extreme violence that accompanied it. Between September 11 and the end of 1973, over 1,800 persons were killed or disappeared by agents of the new government and vigilantes, while thousands more went into exile to save their lives. By the dictatorship's end, over 3,200 people had been killed or disappeared, over 38,000 tortured, and some 200,000 forced into exile.

The Nixon administration's overt support of the coup and the state terrorist regime that emerged from it resonated far beyond Chile's borders. It sent a clear signal to all of Latin America that antirevolutionary regimes employing repression, even state terrorism, could count on U.S. support. It was a green light to Latin America's right wing and armed forces to use any means necessary to eradicate the left and, with that, to erase the advances that workers and, in some countries, campesinos had made through lengthy struggles. The ramifications of U.S. approval of Chilean state terrorism were soon felt throughout the region.

The junta's March 1974 "Declaration of Principles" revealed the outlines of the military's design for a new Chile. The document declared that the military regime "does not fear or hesitate to declare itself anti-Marxist." The military would need to hold power indefinitely "because the task of reconstructing the country morally,

institutionally, and materially requires profound and prolonged action.” To accomplish this multifaceted reconstruction, it was “absolutely necessary to change the mentality of Chileans” by replacing Marxism and its credo of class struggle with the values of family, class harmony, conservative Catholicism, and Chilean nationalism.³ On the economic front, the regime aimed to replace state direction of the economy as developed in the 1930s and 1940s and deepened under presidents Frei and Allende with the neoliberal, free market model taught by Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago and to turn economic policy over to Friedman’s Chilean students, the “Chicago Boys.”

The Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (Directorate of National Intelligence, DINA)—a secret police composed of military, police, and civilians that operated without constraints—was the primary instrument for eradicating the left. Run by General Manuel Contreras, the DINA originated in an extreme faction of the army that enthusiastically embraced National Security Doctrine and countersubversive warfare. Pinochet used his close relationship with Contreras and the DINA to maneuver in only fifteen months from head of the junta to president of the republic, establishing a highly personal dictatorship and dominating the junta that ruled through the end of the dictatorship.

The DINA established secret detention centers where kidnapped leftists were tortured, often under the supervision of medical doctors, and sometimes killed. Villa Grimaldi, a confiscated villa on the outskirts of Santiago, was the largest and most notorious of the centers. Gladys Díaz, a Villa Grimaldi survivor, recalled her experience of torture.

“Sometimes it’s electricity; sometimes drugs . . . the submarine, when they stick your head in sewer water and they leave you there until you almost drown, they take you out, they stick you in again; the ‘telephone’ that breaks your—I have a broken eardrum. . . . When there wasn’t physical torture there was psychological torture. . . . They put on tapes of voices of children to make me think that my son had been captured. The defense mechanisms that a person uses in certain extreme situations are infinite. . . . I sometimes dreamed about beautiful things—that gave me some consolation. I remember having awakened to the sound of the warbling of . . . a little bird that was outside, and how I was able to keep the sound of that bird’s singing in my ears for days, enjoying it.”

Source: Thomas C. Wright and Rody Oñate, *Flight from Chile: Voices of Exile* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 82.

The DINA’s priority targets were the underground operatives of the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) and the Communist and Socialist parties. These clandestine units had been formed at the time of the coup to retain their parties’ presence in the country in the face of the murder or forced exile of most of their leaders.

By 1976, the last remnants of the left underground were eradicated and Pinochet's control over the country was absolute and uncontested.

At the onset of the dictatorship, Chile had no human rights organizations to defend citizens against state terrorism. The Catholic Church quickly took action, improvising emergency services for victims and their families in conjunction with other religious groups and international humanitarian agencies. In 1976, the Archdiocese of Santiago established its *Vicaría de la Solidaridad* (Vicariate of Solidarity), which became the largest and most active of a dozen human rights organizations that developed under difficult circumstances. Despite its heroic efforts, the human rights movement failed to rein in the repression but did contribute to easing it in some cases while providing aid and solace to victims of torture and families of the murdered and disappeared. The Vicaría's lawyers filed some nine thousand writs of habeas corpus with the courts in attempts to free arrested persons; all but a handful were denied by judges sympathetic to or intimidated by the regime. But a decade after the dictatorship's end, the Vicaría's court filings proved invaluable for bringing hundreds of former repressors to justice.

The dictatorship's halcyon years were 1977–1981. After severely contracting from the Chicago Boys' radical measures, the economy began to boom and unemployment declined. With the underground opposition eliminated, repression was relaxed but not eliminated. Despite the dedicated anti-regime activism of exiles spread throughout the world, international opposition to the regime was largely ineffectual. The 1976 election of U.S. president Jimmy Carter, who embraced human rights as a determinant of foreign policy, ended the strong U.S. support the regime had enjoyed under Nixon and Kissinger. However, by making superficial changes, including replacing the notorious DINA with a nearly identical secret police under a different name and leader, Pinochet avoided serious confrontation with the Carter administration. In 1980, he unveiled a new constitution that confirmed his dictatorial powers for at least eight more years and configured a "protected democracy" for a distant post-Pinochet Chile.

The superheated Chilean economy began to falter in late 1981 as bankruptcies multiplied and unemployment again swelled. Spontaneous protests in the Santiago *poblaciones* (slums) soon gave way to organized demonstrations as leaders of the outlawed political parties forged alliances and pushed to force Pinochet out of office before his eight-year term expired. The appearance of the first open opposition since 1973 was met with heightened repression; then, in response to a failed 1986 assassination attempt against Pinochet, the regime unleashed more severe repression that forced the opposition to abandon its quest to drive Pinochet from office and to focus instead on defeating him on his own terms: at the ballot box.

The 1980 constitution required a plebiscite before the end of Pinochet's eight years on whether to give him or a designated successor another eight-year term. As 1988 approached, other state terrorist regimes in the region—those in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil—had ended, and President Ronald Reagan's initial support had waned over concerns that a rigged vote in the plebiscite could reignite the opposition movement and bring a new leftist government to power. Furthermore, recognizing

that most of the formerly Marxist left had embraced European-style social democracy and were no threat to the Chicago Boys' economic model, many of Pinochet's supporters advocated a clean plebiscite. Facing these pressures, Pinochet was forced to conduct a relatively fair election, although he harassed the opposition in a variety of ways. A broad alliance of sixteen center and left parties formed the Concertación de Partidos por el NO (Alliance of Parties for the NO), campaigned vigorously, and defeated the overconfident dictator by a margin of 55 to 43 percent. Fellow junta members had to restrain an enraged Pinochet from annulling the outcome. But despite the electoral loss, Pinochet and the military tightly controlled the transition to civilian government.

Given the outcome of the plebiscite, the constitution dictated that an election should be held in 1989 and a president and new Congress inaugurated on March 11, 1990, sixteen-and-a-half years to the day after the coup that derailed Chilean democracy. Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin, supported by the same coalition that had defeated Pinochet, won 55 percent of the vote against two right-wing candidates. The Concertación also won control of the Chamber of Deputies; but owing to the electoral code that skewed the vote in favor of the right and the presence of nine senators appointed by Pinochet in the forty-seven-member Senate, the Concertación faced certain rejection of any laws not acceptable to the right and to Pinochet himself, who had extended his commandership of the army for eight more years, to 1998. This was the protected democracy that Pinochet bequeathed Chile.

In Argentina, urban guerrillas and radicalized and mobilized workers and youth posed a serious threat of revolution by the early 1970s. The guerrillas emerged from a failed 1969 popular uprising in the industrial city of Córdoba against a repressive dictator, General Juan Carlos Onganía. Six original groups coalesced into two major guerrilla organizations: the Trotskyist/Guevarist Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (People's Revolutionary Army) and the Peronist/socialist *Montoneros*, both of which took cues from the Tupamaros in neighboring Uruguay and combined Robin Hood-style actions with armed attacks on police, military men, and public figures. Concurrently, the labor movement that former President Juan Domingo Perón had created (Chapter 8) along with radicalized youth worked to destabilize the military governments of the early 1970s, demanding that Perón—exiled in Spain since 1955—be allowed to return to Argentina.

The combined opposition became powerful enough to convince the military that only Perón's return could restore peace and order. Thus after some maneuvering, the aging Perón was elected president in September 1973 with 62 percent of the vote, but his return to power did little to quell the guerrilla violence and general turmoil that beset Argentina. Upon his death less than a year later, his widow and vice president, Isabel Perón, succeeded him, and the next two years brought a sharp increase in guerrilla actions and right-wing armed response. As violence escalated and government power deteriorated, Argentina appeared to be disintegrating.

As in Chile, state terrorism in Argentina was not only a reaction to the threat of revolution, but also the instrument for imposing a final solution to the problems of

Marxism and subversion. Army commander General Jorge Rafael Videla and navy commander Admiral Emilio Massera—leaders of the junta established by a March 24, 1976, coup—initially appeared to be moderates who had acted to save the *patria* from the guerrilla violence and disorder that characterized Isabel Perón's inept presidency. Accustomed as they were to frequent coups and military governments, many Argentines welcomed the military coup as a reprieve. In the words of the *Buenos Aires Herald*, "The entire nation responded with relief. . . . This was not just another coup, but a rescue operation."⁴ But in explaining *El Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* (The Process of National Reorganization), as the commanders named their regime, Videla said ominously that the coup signified "the final closing of a historical cycle and the opening of a new one."⁵ Even as they explained *El Proceso* to their countrymen, the commanders unleashed a lethal assault on civil society.

By the time the military took power, the urban guerrillas had been severely weakened. Two months prior to the coup, General Videla had written that the guerrillas were "absolutely impotent," had "little fighting capability," were unable to "reach a military level," and remained capable of only isolated attacks on the authorities.⁶ At no time after the coup were the guerrillas a threat to hold territory or overthrow the government, and their ranks continued to diminish. Yet, the Dirty War went on, as the military used an increasingly fictitious struggle against the guerrillas as cover for implementing the final solution to the threat of revolution: the physical elimination of Marxists and subversives, their supporters, and anyone who might fall under their influence, through state terrorism.

In Chile, the coup plot had come together at the last minute, and the man who would rule the country was a late convert. As a result, coordination was faulty, factions within the military were initially divided over the course to follow, and the severe repression during the first months of military governance was public and very visible until the DINA moved it underground. In Argentina, the military commanders had agreed in advance to install state terrorism to eradicate the left. Like their transandean counterparts, they closed Congress, appointed military governors, imposed censorship, and purged unions, universities, and other potential sources of opposition. But they had learned from the Chilean experience that open, uncontrolled state terrorism carried a price in the form of international condemnation: Thus, the Argentine military's methodology of choice for eliminating the revolutionary threat was the disappearance.

The regime jailed, tortured, exiled, and murdered individuals whose bodies were recovered, but the Dirty War became synonymous with disappearances, and the term "disappear" became a sinister transitive verb. By disappearing the enemy, the military left neither arrest records nor corpses and thus enjoyed plausible deniability. Disappearance also served to intensify and prolong the general state of terror and discourage challenges to the regime; for as long as one's family member was missing rather than certified as dead, the family was neutralized, fearful that making waves would cause the loved one's death.

In Chile, the brunt of state terrorism was directed at leaders and militants of the Communist and Socialist parties and the MIR, and most nonaffiliated people were

not targeted for heinous human rights violations. In Argentina, broad segments of the population were subject to torture, murder, and disappearance as definitions of “subversives” and “enemies of the state” were quite elastic. To Videla, subversives were those who embraced “ideas contrary to our western, Christian civilization,” while General Reynaldo Bignone considered them both “anti-fatherland” and agents of the “anti-Christ.”⁷ Having thus dehumanized its victims, the dictatorship recognized no legal or moral constraints on its power in the war against subversion. According to Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Pascarelli, “The fight in which we are engaged does not recognize moral limits; it is conducted beyond good or evil.”⁸

General Ibérico Saint Jean, military governor of Buenos Aires Province, articulated his strategic understanding of the Dirty War in the following terms: “First we will kill all the subversives, then we will kill their collaborators, then . . . their sympathizers, then . . . those who remain indifferent; and, finally, we will kill the timid.”⁹ General Luciano Menéndez phrased his approach to ridding the country of subversion in quantitative terms: “We are going to have to kill 50,000 people: 25,000 subversives, 20,000 sympathizers, and we will make 5,000 mistakes.”¹⁰ Saint Jean’s and Menéndez’s ambitions and plans may have overstated the reach of state terrorism in Argentina, but they offer chilling insights into the thinking that underpinned the Dirty War.

The junta divided the country into large “zones,” smaller “subzones,” and even smaller “areas,” all under military or police command. Under general orders from the top, zone, subzone, and area commanders established task groups of between half a dozen and a dozen military and police personnel that operated semiautonomously to terrorize the populace. Disappearances began with abductions, at the victim’s home or workplace or even on the street. Abducted persons were not taken to police stations, where their detention would become a matter of public record, but to one of over four hundred secret detention centers set up around the country, whose existence could be and was consistently denied. Upon arrival at the facility, prisoners were assigned numbers and taken to the torture chamber where they faced up to a week or more of physical and psychological torture. After the period of intense torture, victims were moved to a holding area where, typically, they were handcuffed and shackled in spaces so tiny they were called “*tubos*,” or tubes, and subjected to ongoing physical and psychological abuse and degradation. The Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (Navy Mechanics’ School, ESMA) in Buenos Aires, known as the Argentine Auschwitz, was one of the largest and most notorious of the secret detention centers; of over five thousand abducted persons detained there, almost none survived.

Two categories of individuals were subjected to particularly savage treatment. Captive pregnant women were removed from the *tubos* as their delivery time approached. After giving birth, they were separated from their babies and either killed outright or returned to the holding area for later disposal. The infants were given to military families and others favored by the regime, along with false documentation. Jews suffered disproportionately because of their overrepresentation in some of the occupations and professions that the military considered hotbeds of subversion, and



Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA) detention center, converted to a museum of memory

because of virulent anti-Semitism within the military and the right in general. As a result, though constituting less than 2 percent of the national population, Jews comprised 10 percent of the disappeared. According to surviving witnesses, they suffered even greater humiliation and dehumanization than gentiles.

Prisoners in the secret detention centers were graded on their perceived degree of dangerousness: potentially dangerous, dangerous, and extremely dangerous. Some of the “potentially dangerous” were sent to public prisons or freed, while almost all the others faced death. The most common forms of execution were gunfire and throwing live, drugged prisoners into the ocean from aircraft; in all cases, great pains were taken to prevent the bodies from being found. After a few bodies washed up on the Uruguayan shore of the Río de la Plata, death flights simply went further out over the Atlantic Ocean to drop their victims.

At the time of the coup that established the dictatorship, Argentines had no defense against the reign of terror unleashed on them. In marked contrast to Chile, the Catholic Church hierarchy did not intervene in favor of victims; in fact, many of the bishops and archbishops supported the Dirty War, while numerous priests, mostly followers of liberation theology, worked at their peril to aid victims and their families. The best-known human rights organization was the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo), a group of women who first met making their rounds of police stations, military bases, and morgues in search of their disappeared children. They failed in an attempt to petition junta leader Videla for information about their children, then settled into a routine of marching in the Plaza de Mayo in front of the presidential palace on Thursday afternoons, bearing placards with their



Madres de Plaza de Mayo

children's photographs and the phrase "donde están?" (where are they?). These brave women were beaten, some of them murdered, but they persisted and became the face of resistance to state terrorism. Another human rights organization, the Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales (Center for Legal and Social Studies, CELS), tried legal approaches to protect individuals. Like the Chilean Vicaría, CELS filed thousands of writs of habeas corpus that were rejected but which became critical evidence in the later trials of hundreds of practitioners of state terrorism.

The number of disappeared Argentines will never be known. The truth commission established after the return of democracy documented 8,960 disappearances but acknowledged that, owing to time constraints and military obfuscation, its count was far from complete. Human rights organizations put the number at thirty thousand disappeared. Victims included people of all ages, both sexes, a variety of occupations, and at least a dozen disabled persons—some completely paralyzed. In addition to those labeled "subversive," some people were disappeared for their money, as corrupt repressors forced the wealthy to sign over their homes, businesses, automobiles, and any other thing of value before being killed. Others were random victims.

In contrast to its Chilean counterpart, the Argentine military expected to hold power indefinitely and thus made no provision for an eventual return to civilian government, but the regime began to unravel after four years. The Inter-American

Commission on Human Rights conducted an on-site investigation of disappearances in 1980 and its damning report, banned in Argentina but circulated clandestinely, demonstrated conclusively that the missing people were indeed victims of a government conspiracy—not “terrorists” killed in confrontations with police or who had fled the country, as the military consistently claimed. A severe economic crisis in 1981 sparked the beginnings of overt opposition. To rally public support for its faltering government, the military in 1982 invaded the Malvinas/Falkland Islands, claimed by Argentina but long occupied by Britain. The brief war was a disaster for Argentina, and any lingering support for the dictatorship quickly eroded. Having proved itself inept at governing, managing the economy, and fighting a war, the military beat a hasty retreat to the barracks. After granting itself amnesty and publishing a final document justifying its actions as patriotic service that saved the country from Marxists and subversives, the military turned power over to civilians. After nearly eight years of state terrorism, President Raúl Alfonsín of the moderate Unión Cívica Radical Party and a new Congress took office on December 10, 1983.

STATE TERRORISM IN CENTRAL AMERICA

While sharing essential traits with state terrorism in the Southern Cone, the Central American phenomenon developed in a different context and assumed different characteristics. Guatemala and El Salvador were far less developed economically and socially than Argentina and Chile. The colonial legacy of a rigid social hierarchy, while somewhat modified over the years, still held firm: Both countries were still dominated by the traditional coffee oligarchies in alliance with the armed forces. Both had small middle classes and large, predominantly rural lower classes—mostly Maya Indian in Guatemala and primarily mestizo in El Salvador. While the impact of the Cuban Revolution was relatively weak in Central America, it did create demands for change that gave rise to guerrilla action in Guatemala and, initially, calls for economic and social reform through the electoral process in El Salvador. Rather than concede even limited change, the oligarchy–military alliance in Guatemala relied on state terrorism to preserve its monopoly of power and economic dominance. While the Salvadoran elites flirted with cosmetic reforms, they also relied on their military allies to apply state terrorism to defend their interests. State terrorism in both countries not only targeted leftist political groups, but it also developed into a race and class war against the Indian and mestizo peasantry and led to some of the worst atrocities committed in Latin America, including genocide.

State terrorism in Guatemala arose in the context of a guerrilla war that lasted from 1962 to 1996. The guerrilla movement arose out of the Jacobo Árbenz presidency of 1950–1954 and its overthrow by a CIA-orchestrated invasion and coup (Chapter 8). Having experienced the beginnings of reform, some Guatemalans were receptive to the message coming from the Cuban Revolution and Che Guevara’s call for guerrilla

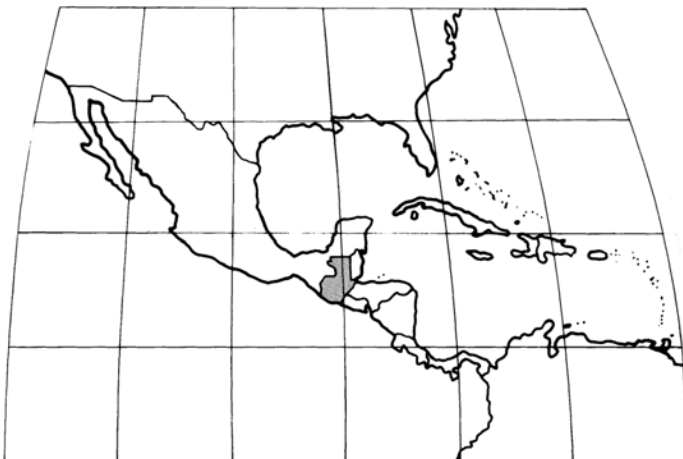
warfare. Among them were young nationalist army officers who attempted a coup in November 1960. After failing, leaders Marco Antonio Yon Sosa and Luis Turcios Lima in 1962 formed a guerrilla movement, the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (Rebel Armed Forces, FAR), comprised of a mix of reformers, Communists, peasants, and officers. Guerrilla activity varied in intensity over the years but never threatened to overthrow the government.

Despite the guerrillas' limited success and failure to establish a viable liberated zone, the military regimes of the 1960s inaugurated the response followed by Guatemalan governments over the next three decades: severe repression against all potential guerrilla sympathizers or collaborators, including peasants, left and moderate political parties, intellectuals, students, and union leaders. Governments used not only army troops, including U.S.-trained ranger units but also death squads, themselves comprised largely of army and police personnel. The most notorious of these was the Movimiento Anticomunista Nacional Organizado (Organized National Anti-Communist Movement, MANO), referred to as the Mano Blanca (White Hand). Together, the repressive forces carried out assassinations and kidnappings in the urban areas and large-scale massacres of the predominantly Mayan peasantry in the countryside.

Colonel Carlos Arana Osorio, elected president in 1970, promised to eliminate the guerrillas even "if it was necessary to turn the country into a cemetery."¹¹ He was successful in killing the surviving leader of the FAR, Yon Sosa, the same year, leading to the group's dissolution; but by that time, the deadly cycle of guerrilla activity and state terrorism was entrenched. For the next twenty years, with military men in the presidency or exercising the real power during periods of weak civilian administrations, there was no realistic possibility of a resumption of the reforms begun under Árbenz. Whenever new guerrilla outbreaks occurred, the U.S.-trained and supplied army and the death squads swung into action, intimidating, assassinating, and massacring in the name of anti-Communism. A 1978 massacre of Mayan Indians in the northern town of Panzós spurred Indian peasants to organize in protest and guerrillas to renew their efforts. The government response was predictable but unprecedented in its scale.

General Fernando Romeo Lucas García, president from 1978 to 1982, escalated the repression against leftists, trade unionists, and peasants. In 1980, twenty-seven leaders of the national labor confederation were kidnapped and never seen again. Human rights groups reported over three hundred massacres of Mayan peasants during Lucas García's term. When villagers from one of the affected regions went to Guatemala City to protest, they were ignored until they occupied the Spanish embassy, aided by university students. Police then allegedly torched the building rather than heed the ambassador's pleas for negotiations, killing all the protestors and several Spanish diplomats. Spain broke diplomatic relations in response. The 1979 Sandinista victory in Nicaragua stoked hopes for change in Guatemala, as elsewhere in Central America, adding to the ferment caused by the Panzós massacre.

Guatemala Today Fact Box



Area: 42,042 square miles
Population: 14,918,999
Population growth rate: 1.82%
Urban population: 51.6%
Ethnic composition: mestizo and European 59.4%, and all Mayan subgroups 40.3%
Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic, Protestant, and indigenous Maya (no figures provided)
Life expectancy: 72.02 years
Literacy: 81.5%
Years of schooling (average): 11 years
GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$7,700
Percentage of population living in poverty: 59.3%
Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 42.4% and lowest 1.3%
Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 0.42%
Internet users (percentage of total population): 17.1%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

U.S. support of Guatemalan state terrorism had temporarily ended during the administration of President Jimmy Carter (1977–1981), who made respect for human rights a centerpiece of his foreign policy and a condition for offering economic and military aid. With the accession of Ronald Reagan in 1981, full U.S. financial, logistical, and moral support for state terrorism resumed and the genocide escalated. General Lucas García's repressive measures paled in comparison with the state terrorism unleashed by his successor. General Efraín Ríos Montt, an evangelical Protestant, served as president for seventeen bloody months and faced a renewed guerrilla effort led by the newly formed *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional de Guatemala* (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union, URNG), an amalgamation of several small groups. Ríos Montt launched a scorched earth policy against the Mayan peasantry that annihilated some six hundred villages, killing thousands and driving over one hundred thousand across the border into Mexico, where Guatemalan helicopters machine-gunned the refugee camps.

In the genocide of villagers, troops and death squads raped women, killed men, and bayoneted babies or smashed them against rocks. Adding to the Indians' misery, Ríos Montt set up "civilian self-defense patrols" which enrolled thousands of men and boys in normally unarmed squads to defend their villages against the guerrillas and report suspected subversive activity. If accused of failing in their duties, patrol members faced severe reprisals. Reagan increased arms transfers to the Guatemalan armed forces. He visited the country in an effort to offset negative reactions to the genocide in the United States and declared that Ríos Montt was "totally dedicated to democracy in Guatemala" and that the Guatemalan government had been getting

a “bum rap” on human rights.¹² Ríos Montt was eventually tried and convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity in 2013, but Guatemala’s highest court overturned the verdict.

The strongest voice of Indian protest was that of Rigoberta Menchú, a Quiché Mayan born to a poor peasant family and an activist for Indian and women’s rights from an early age. After her parents and brother were murdered by government forces, she became prominent in the opposition until forced to flee to Mexico for her safety. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 and has continued her work for Indian rights and reconciliation not only in Guatemala but throughout Latin America. She told her story in a book.

“My name is Rigoberta Menchú. I am 23 years old. This is my testimony. . . . It’s not only my life, it’s also the testimony of my people. . . . My story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people.” (1) “They took my brother away, bleeding from different places. When they’d done with him, he didn’t look like a person any more. His whole face was disfigured. . . . He couldn’t see any more; they’d even forced stones into his eyes.” (203) “My brother was tortured more than sixteen days. They cut off his fingernails, they cut off his fingers, they cut off his skin, they burned parts of his skin. . . . They cut the skin off his head and pulled it down on either side and cut off the fleshy part of his face.” (204) “They lined up the tortured and poured petrol on them; and then the soldiers set fire to each one of them.” (209) “There’ll be a time when things will be different, when we’ll all be happy, perhaps not with nice houses, but at least we won’t see our lands running with blood and sweat.” (266)

Source: Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, edited and introduced by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, translated by Ann Wright, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2009).



Rigoberta Menchú

Source: Carlos Rodriguez

Violence declined under civilian governments after 1985, but the struggle continued until UN-brokered talks between the government and the URNG led to a peace accord in 1996. As part of a preliminary agreement, a truth commission, known as the Commission for Historical Clarification, was formed in 1994. Among the Commission's findings: "agents of the state . . . committed acts of genocide against groups of Mayan people."¹³ The total number of people killed was over two hundred thousand, 83 percent of them Mayan; state forces and "related paramilitary groups" (death squads) committed 93 percent and the insurgents 3 percent of the human rights violations. State terrorism in Guatemala, then, was responsible for over half of the total slaughter carried out by Latin American governments in their war on the left.

In El Salvador, beginning with General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez who ordered the massacre of striking coffee workers in *La Matanza* of 1932 (Chapter 4), military officers served as presidents until 1979, with one brief interruption. They formed a close alliance with the coffee oligarchy, governing under a façade of democracy by holding regular elections from which the majority were excluded, until developments of the 1960s began to challenge that arrangement. The Cuban Revolution and the Alliance for Progress introduced ideas of revolution and reform, benefiting primarily the moderate Christian Democratic Party. While the short-lived Central American Common Market, founded in 1960, brought economic growth, two developments increased landlessness among the country's majority rural population and accelerated the formation of urban slums. First, a boom in cotton and sugar, both requiring large properties for efficient production, drove smallholders off their land. Second, as a consequence of the so-called Soccer War with Honduras in 1969, thousands of Salvadorans who had left their overpopulated country to farm vacant land across the border were forced to return. In a preemptive move to suppress potential unrest in the countryside and the urban slums, right-wing elements in the late 1960s formed the Organización Democrática Nacionalista (Democratic Nationalist Organization, ORDEN), whose acronym means "order," as a death squad designed to counter threats to the status quo.

Christian Democrat José Napoleón Duarte, former mayor of San Salvador, challenged the military-oligarchy alliance by running for president in 1972; despite Duarte's first-place finish, massive fraud handed the presidency to the conservative candidate. The military-oligarchy alliance retained power in the 1977 election through even more blatant fraud, demonstrating conclusively that change could not be achieved through peaceful means. Guerrilla groups formed and, as in Guatemala, the army, National Guard, and death squads responded with heightened repression of leftist political, union, and student organizations and of the country's rural poor.

The years 1979 and 1980 were turning points in the Salvadoran conflict. The July 1979 Sandinista victory in Nicaragua validated the guerrilla approach and heightened expectations that the Sandinista approach could work in El

Salvador. The military reacted initially by overthrowing its own president and forming a mixed military–civilian junta that formally adopted a reformist tone designed to preempt the revolutionaries, but hard-liners continued to dominate behind the scenes. The archbishop of San Salvador, Oscar Arnulfo Romero, an outspoken critic of the death squads and general repression, was shot to death while saying mass in a hospital on March 24, 1980. The previous day, Romero had said in his last sermon: “In the name of God, in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise up more and more loudly to heaven, I ask you, I beg you, I order you in God’s name: Stop the repression.”¹⁴ His assassination was the military’s boldest step to date in its campaign of intimidation and assassination of priests, nuns, and lay religious workers inspired by the doctrine of liberation theology to work with and support the poor and humble against oppressive conditions—actions that the military and oligarchy saw as interference with their control.

The same month, the government declared a nationwide state of siege. In October 1980, the guerrilla groups united as the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, FMLN), named for the Communist leader of the rural workers’ strike that led to *La Matanza* in 1932. The FMLN had five thousand fighters within a year of its founding. In November 1980, Reagan was elected U.S. president. The following month, a death squad raped and killed three U.S. nuns and a lay worker, adding to the growing number of murdered church-affiliated persons, both domestic and foreign.

El Salvador Today Fact Box





Area: 8,124 square miles

Population: 6,141,350

Population growth rate: 0.25%

Urban population: 66.7%

Ethnic composition: mestizo 86.3%, white 12.7%, Amerindian 0.2%, and black 0.1%

Religious affiliations (nominal): Catholic 57.1%, Protestant 23.8%, other 2.3%, and none 16.8%

Life expectancy: 74.42 years

Literacy: 88%

Years of schooling (average): 13 years

GDP per capita (U.S. dollars): \$8,300

Percentage of population living in poverty: 36.5%

Household income (proportion in the highest and lowest 10%): highest 37% and lowest 1%

Military expenditures as percentage of GDP: 0.99%

Internet users (percentage of total population): 27.3%

Source: *The World Factbook* (Central Intelligence Agency, Office of Public Affairs).

Note: GDP, gross domestic product

Under Reagan, the United States pursued dual strategies to defeat the insurgency. On one hand, it pushed for a moderate government and even advocated agrarian reform to quell peasant support of the insurgency; thus, it supported Christian Democrat Duarte's successful second bid for the presidency in 1982. Duarte initiated agrarian and other reforms, but with little effect as he was unable to control

the hard-line military. The other side of U.S. policy reflected Reagan's Cold War view that the FMLN was a Communist organization under the control of an alleged Moscow–Havana–Managua axis. This perception justified fortifying the Salvadoran military with money, equipment, and training—particularly in counterinsurgency warfare. Accordingly, military aid rose from \$6 million in 1980 (President Carter's last year) to \$82 million in 1982 and \$197 million in 1984.

There is little evidence that the army's fighting capabilities increased as a result of this massive injection of aid. Indeed, by the mid-1980s, the civil war had reached the point where the government held the main cities and kept the major highways open by day and the FMLN held large swaths of territory and operated freely by night. But the level of state terrorism rose significantly in the 1980s as the U.S.–financed and trained counterinsurgency battalions and the death squads turned their weapons against civilians as well as guerrillas, repressing pro-democracy organizations, massacring entire villages, and driving peasants out of the countryside.

One of the best known massacres occurred at El Mozote in December 1981, carried out by the most notorious of the U.S-trained counterinsurgency units cum death squads, the Atlacatl Battalion. In this operation, the battalion rounded up and killed between seven hundred and one thousand men, women, and children in the hamlet of El Mozote and neighboring villages. The U.S. embassy whitewashed this and the dozens of other massacres of civilians, and in 1984, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America Elliott Abrams denied that the well-documented massacres had even occurred.

On November 12, 1989, soldiers of the Atlacatl Battalion entered the Jesuit-run Central American University in San Salvador where, under the orders of a high-ranking army official, they killed six Jesuits, including the rector, vice-rector, and head of the Human Rights Institute along with their housekeeper and her daughter. This high-profile operation in the capital could not be swept under the rug, and it swayed U. S. public opinion, the U.S. Congress, and President George H. W. Bush against continuing support of the government. Meanwhile, the Sandinistas' electoral defeat in 1990, combined with the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting economic crisis in Cuba, undercut outside support for the FMLN. Brokered by the United Nations, a January 1992 peace accord ended the armed conflict after at least seventy-five thousand people, mostly civilians, had been killed. The war also created hundreds of thousands of refugees and launched the migration stream that made Salvadorans the fastest-growing Latino group in the United States in the late twentieth century.

Facing the existential threat of Cuban-style revolution, many of Latin America's elites and military leaders embraced repression and, in some cases, the physical elimination of the left in their countries. From the 1970s into the 1990s, state terrorism produced an unprecedented crisis of human rights. Regimes that practiced state terrorism extinguished civil and political liberties. They left huge numbers of people permanently physically and emotionally scarred by torture and

forced many more to flee their countries for the safety of exile. By the time the last state terrorist regime ended in Guatemala in 1996, hundreds of thousands of people had been killed, the majority of them innocent civilians caught up in the conflagration, and millions of people were left grieving, often without the solace of having a body to bury and mourn. The legacy of state terrorism continues to haunt Latin America.

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Reflections on the Colonial Legacies, 1959–1990

During the era of the Cuban Revolution, the 1950s florescence of democracy gave way to a period of extreme authoritarian governance. In Cuba, Fidel Castro cemented the island's authoritarian tradition, eventually institutionalized in the apparatus of a Communist state. In response to the rise of *fidelismo* and the spread of revolutionary movements, military regimes began to replace elected governments in the early 1960s. By the 1970s, state terrorist regimes had arisen in several South American countries to counter the threat of revolution and eradicate the left. State terrorism spread to Central America by 1980. Thus particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, the legacy of authoritarian governance reached unprecedented extremes.

The legacy of a rigid social hierarchy disappeared in Cuba as Castro implemented his revolution on an egalitarian model. In Peru and Nicaragua, where revolutions began, agrarian reform and programs benefiting workers and the poor loosened social boundaries; in Chile, Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship reversed worker and peasant gains. In the climate of reaction that enveloped Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, labor unions and progressive political parties were repressed, reducing or eliminating the prospects of upward mobility for the less fortunate and reinforcing the existing social order.

The colonial legacy of economic dependency continued through the period of revolution and reaction. In Cuba, Castro's quest to end economic dependency failed, as his crash industrialization program faltered and the island exchanged dependency on the United States for a similar situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and its socialist allies. The creative Peruvian approach to overcoming economic dependency, the Velasco Doctrine, gained much attention but failed with the breakup of the Andean

Pact. Although state-driven economic development strategies continued in vogue until the 1980s, relatively little was accomplished to reduce Latin America's economic dependency.

The large landed estate was extinguished in Cuba and was seriously challenged in Peru, Nicaragua, and temporarily in Chile. In most of Latin America, repressive right-wing governments quashed the agrarian reform issue unleashed by the Cuban Revolution and large estates continued to dominate the countryside.

By the 1960s, the status of the Catholic Church was no longer an important political issue. The rise of liberation theology divided the church, but with the great majority of Latin Americans continuing to profess Catholicism, the church retained much of its traditional influence.

VI

CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICA, 1990–PRESENT

12

Neoliberalism, Democracy, the Pink Tide, and Other Developments since 1990

In Latin America, as throughout the world, the pace of change has accelerated in the period since 1990. There are many interesting and important developments that we could examine, such as the Panama Canal's 2000 reversion to Panamanian ownership and its widening to accommodate large container ships; the creation of common markets and political entities including the Union of South American Nations and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States; mass migration of Latin Americans to the United States; and the major problem of trafficking in illegal drugs. But in keeping with the book's purpose and format, we focus primarily on matters that affect the five colonial legacies that we have been following from Chapter 1 while also exploring Cuba since 1990.

NEOLIBERALISM

Half a century after the Great Depression sent the Latin American economies in a new direction, history repeated itself: Another economic crisis led the Latin American economies to change course again. The crisis began in the 1980s but the outcomes materialized primarily in the 1990s and continued into the new millennium.

The majority of Latin American countries, those that relied on imported petroleum, were deeply affected by the "oil shock" of 1973, when the newly formed Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) restricted production to drive prices sharply up. OPEC member countries, mostly in the Middle East, were

flooded with cash, much of which they deposited in foreign banks. These banks, including U.S. giants Bank of America and Chase Manhattan, sought customers for the billions they now had available for lending, and Latin American governments and private firms, struggling with the OPEC effect, readily accepted the proffered loans. As a result, the total Latin American external debt rose dramatically from around \$30 billion in 1970 to some \$230 billion in 1980.

Then came the worldwide recession of the 1980s, which depressed the prices of Latin America's exports and stopped the region's economic growth. A crisis of debt repayment loomed, along with serious discussion of defaulting. When the Mexican government announced in 1982 that it could not meet its payment obligations, the international banking establishment stepped forward. To prevent potential widespread defaults, lenders led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank offered to renegotiate loans to reduce interest rates and payments, and thereby prevent a major catastrophe for the international banks and world economy. They also offered new bridge loans, doubling Latin America's external debt by 1990.

As the condition for offering emergency loans and refinancing billions of dollars of debt, the international lenders prescribed, indeed demanded, implementation of radical policy changes. The "Washington Consensus," known in Latin America as "neoliberalism," involved several elements, including fiscal austerity to balance budgets, opening closed or protected economies to international trade and foreign investment, and privatization of state-owned assets. Chile under the Pinochet dictatorship pioneered neoliberalism (Chapter 11); in the 1990s, Mexico's President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) and Argentina's Carlos Saúl Menem (1989–1999) set the pace of compliance with the new norms, while in almost every country budgets, government services, and subsidies to the poor were slashed; protective tariffs fell; and transnational corporations and national conglomerates bought up the public sector. Government-owned airlines, railroads, utilities, natural resources, telephone companies, and manufacturing plants passed into private hands, usually at bargain prices. In Mexico, the number of state-owned firms fell from 1,155 in 1982 to 158 in 1993; among those acquiring these assets was Mexican Carlos Slim, who has been off-and-on the world's richest person.

The imposition of neoliberalism marked a critical turning point. The state-directed development adopted in response to the Great Depression (Chapter 8) had reduced but not eliminated the economic dependency of the era of the export economies, 1870s–1930 (Chapter 4). In the 1980s and 1990s, facing a crisis of debt repayment or the grave consequences of defaulting, the Latin American countries were forced to surrender national control over economic policy to the international lenders. Thus, a new form of economic dependency gripped Latin America and, although contested in several countries, has continued to this day.

Latin America's economic contraction in the "lost decade" of the 1980s had severe human consequences, exacerbated by the implementation of neoliberal policies. Many jobs were lost due to the reduction in government employment, privatization of government enterprises, and the new competition of imported consumer goods

that negatively impacted the manufacturing sectors. Labor's bargaining power, already weakened by most of the dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s, was further eroded by the contraction of manufacturing and public sector employment, leaving workers vulnerable to unemployment and reductions in wages and benefits. Many who lost their jobs or suffered wage cuts joined the masses living in burgeoning slums and surviving in the informal economy, selling pencils on buses, guarding parked cars, or performing tricks for motorists stopped at traffic signals. In this period of heightened need, the mandated reductions in government spending on health, education, and subsidies for transportation and food (such as the tortilla subsidy in Mexico), were particularly onerous, as illustrated by sporadic but often violent protests against austerity measures and price increases.

The oil shock and debt crisis combined with the imposition of neoliberalism jeopardized or erased the gains made by the middle and working classes over the previous decades in several countries; the accrued benefits of the "Mexican Miracle" (Chapter 7) evaporated as real wages fell by half, propelling millions northward to the United States in search of survival. Economic growth resumed in the 1990s, but in most countries it was erratic and punctuated by the 1995 Mexican financial collapse, the 1999 Brazilian crisis, and financial and economic problems in distant lands. Healthy gross domestic product (GDP) growth occurred during the 2004–2011 "commodities boom" when China's rapid development fueled demand for exports of metals and agricultural products, particularly soybeans. But the boom's end slowed or ended growth and served as a sobering reminder of the region's continuing dependence on raw material exports whose volume and price are determined externally.

The negative effects of neoliberalism were not limited to the urban population. The Cuban Revolution had made agrarian reform a major political issue in much of Latin America, and revolutionary governments in Peru, Chile, and Nicaragua carried out extensive land redistribution programs. Agrarian reform was reversed in Chile under the Pinochet dictatorship, and as neoliberal policies took hold in the 1990s, austerity and the emphasis on economic rather than social development kept the issue off of political agendas in most countries. Moreover, as Latin America's urban population mushroomed from under 50 percent in 1960 to around 80 percent in 2010, political power shifted to the cities and urban priorities took precedence over those of the rural poor and landless. Thus only Bolivia and Venezuela, whose governments challenged the neoliberal trend, carried out significant agrarian reform after 1990.

Mexico illustrates the waning of agrarian reform. A 1992 amendment to article 27 of the 1917 constitution (Chapter 7) ended land distribution after seventy-five years, reversing a core element of the Mexican Revolution. The amendment privatized the *ejido*, allowing communal owners to create individual holdings that could be rented to outsiders, sold, or mortgaged, opening a path to the expansion of large landholdings. In several countries, particularly Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and the eastern Bolivian lowlands, large landholdings increased as agribusiness interests, both

domestic and transnational, bought or otherwise acquired land to produce crops, especially soybeans, for export. Featuring heavy capital investment and modern technology, these agribusiness operations are a far cry from the colonial hacienda, but like the traditional large estate, they control large tracts of land, to the virtual exclusion of small holdings.

The economic problems of the 1980s, compounded by neoliberal policies, increased the number and percentage of Latin Americans living in poverty and redistributed income and wealth in favor of the elites. Around 40 percent of the region's population was estimated to live in poverty in 1980, a figure that rose to 50 percent by 1990. The World Bank found that in 1993, 110 million Latin Americans, or a quarter of the region's population, lived in extreme poverty on one dollar per day or less, an increase of 20 percent since 1987. Poverty declined in the late 1990s and early 2000s, driven down by the 2004–2011 commodities boom and by antipoverty programs adopted in Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, and elsewhere, but millions of people still perched precariously just above the poverty line. The end of the commodities boom raised the specter of a new cycle of impoverishment. Meanwhile, income inequality in Latin America was the world's highest: In 2010, the top 10 percent received 37 percent of all income, while the lowest 10 percent got only 1.5 percent.

AN UNPRECEDENTED ERA OF DEMOCRACY

The period since 1990 has been unique in Latin American political history. Apart from Cuba and Haiti, elected civilian governments held sway throughout the region. With very few exceptions, these governments passed the most basic test of democracy: They took power through free, fair, and open elections.

Latin America's transition to democracy occurred in the face of serious obstacles. One of these was the rise of neoliberalism, with the attendant growth of poverty and income inequality. Another was the lack of democratic culture in most countries. Uruguay, Chile, and Costa Rica were the main exceptions, and the first two experienced the eclipse but not the total extinction of their democratic cultures and values under state terrorist governments. Some countries had almost no experience with democracy, having been under caudillo, military, or oligarchic rule during much or most of their independent histories. Argentina's first democratic president following the end of the Dirty War, Raúl Alfonsín, explained the problem facing his country, which had had more experience with democracy than many: "It was not a matter of reconstructing a system that was functioning well until it was interrupted by authoritarianism, but of establishing new foundations for an authentic democratic system."¹ That challenge was more acute in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, or Mexico, where a second fundamental test of democracy had rarely or never been met: the peaceful transfer of power to the opposition following an election.

Yet another challenge in some countries was the legacy of state terrorism. The civilian governments installed following the end of highly repressive regimes faced

profoundly divided societies. On one side were the armed forces and the civilians who had supported their policy of exterminating the left, while on the other were victims of repression and the human rights movements formed during the dictatorships. The main issue dividing these societies was justice versus impunity. Would the amnesty laws left in place by exiting military regimes protect repressors from prosecution? Would victims, their families, and the human rights movements be satisfied with the reports of truth commissions, or would they demand investigations and trials? Would the militaries submit to prosecution after, in their view, heroically saving their countries from Marxism and subversion? These were some of the dilemmas facing the new civilian governments intent on shoring up their fragile democracies. Two countries have had some success in meeting this challenge: In Argentina and Chile, hundreds of former repressors have been tried and convicted since 2000, while the poisonous legacy of state terrorism is largely unresolved elsewhere.

Latin America's trend toward democratic governance was part of a global "wave" of democratization, as identified by political scientist Samuel P. Huntington.² The wave began with the fall of dictatorships in Portugal and Greece in 1974 and Spain the following year. It accelerated in the 1990s following the end of the Eastern European Communist regimes and the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The spread of democracy was in large measure a reaction against authoritarianism. In Latin America, where only Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Colombia remained free of military domination between the 1960s and 1990s, the reaction was particularly strong, manifested both in support for democracy and for the human rights so severely abused in many countries.

As of mid-2016, Latin America had experienced only four successful military coups, two of them in Haiti, since the Paraguayan armed forces ended the thirty-five-year dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner in 1989. The military regimes instituted in response to the threat of Cuban-style revolution gave way to civilian governments, mostly in the 1980s and 1990s. In South America, the Argentine state terrorist regime ended in 1983, followed by the Uruguayan in 1984, the Brazilian in 1985, and the Chilean in 1990. The military-dominated governments of El Salvador and Guatemala ended in 1992 and 1996, respectively. Since that time, rule by democratic governments has prevailed, and military influence in politics has diminished. The post-1990 period compares favorably with the previous high tide of democracy in the 1950s, which ended under the destabilizing impact of the Cuban Revolution.

Proclamations about democracy and human rights have not been empty words: Several countries enacted laws or amended constitutions to translate the rhetoric of democracy and human rights into reality. Democracy was strengthened by making elections more transparent and politics more inclusive by expanding participation through lowering the voting age, making the vote obligatory, and mandating quotas for women candidates for office (see below). Numerous countries have strengthened their commitment to human rights by legislation and by ratifying international human rights treaties. Argentina went the furthest in guaranteeing human rights: In 1994, it incorporated the nine international human rights treaties

that the country had ratified directly into its constitution and declared them superior to domestic law.

Meanwhile, the Organization of American States (OAS) began promoting democracy. In 2001, it adopted the Inter-American Democratic Charter, whose article 21 calls for the suspension of a member state, by a two-thirds vote, in the case of an “unconstitutional interruption of the democratic order.”²³ That rule was tested in 2009 when the Honduran armed forces arrested President José Manuel Zelaya and sent him into exile. This was not a standard or clear-cut military coup, however, as the Honduran Supreme Court had ordered Zelaya’s arrest for defying its orders and, the day after the military acted, Congress voted overwhelmingly to remove Zelaya from office and install his constitutionally designated successor as president. Nonetheless, proving that the Democratic Charter was more than rhetoric, the OAS suspended Honduras, an action it had not taken since suspending Cuba in 1962. The issue was resolved and Honduras’s good standing was restored in 2011.

There have been other tests of Latin America’s commitment to democracy. In earlier periods, political instability frequently triggered military coups designed to restore order or, in the era of the Cuban Revolution, to cleanse their countries of Marxism and “subversion.” However, despite this history of intervention, the armed forces generally refrained from staging coups when political instability or other irregular situations, such as interruptions of presidential terms, arose.

Interruptions of the constitutional order have tested the military’s restraint in several countries since 1990. Bolivian presidents resigned or were impeached and removed from office before finishing their terms on two occasions. Paraguay experienced the same situation twice and Peru once—all without military coups. In Argentina, a severe 2001 economic crisis in which the national currency lost two-thirds of its value overnight triggered deadly riots and led to the president’s resignation, followed by four interim presidencies within twelve days. This multi-dimensional crisis offered an open invitation to military intervention in a country with a lengthy history of coups, but the armed forces stood aside. In 2016, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff was impeached, removed from office, and replaced by her constitutionally designated successor while the armed forces remained in the background. In Ecuador, where five presidencies ended prematurely between 1997 and 2005, the military carried out a coup in 2000. But after removing the president, the officers restored constitutional government after only eighteen hours by turning over power to the elected vice president. Thus in the new era of democracy, interrupted presidencies have normally been resolved by constitutional prescription, not military intervention.

Despite notable advances, democracy and the protection of human rights in Latin America are works in progress. Voter apathy is a problem, and there is still distrust of election results in some countries. Nor has authoritarianism been vanquished, as illustrated by Peru’s elected President Alberto Fujimori (1990–2000), who in 1992 shut down Congress, suspended the constitution, and assumed dictatorial powers; Argentina’s President Carlos Menem (1989–1999), who packed the Supreme Court

with unqualified cronies in order to push his agenda; and Venezuela's Hugo Chávez (1999–2013), who created a cult of personality that underpinned his great personal power. Large-scale corruption tarnished several Latin American governments and was instrumental in the 2016 impeachment of Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff. Human rights are more respected than ever, and both private organizations and governmental agencies constantly monitor compliance; but one need only read Human Rights Watch's *Annual Report* to be reminded that the human rights situation still needs improvement.

DEMOCRATIZATION IN MEXICO

Mexico presents a special case of democratization. While Mexico avoided military governance during the period of reaction in Latin America, it was not a functioning democracy despite holding regular elections at the local, state, and federal levels. Since 1929, it had been under the complete control of a single party, known since 1946 as the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), which used any and all means to maintain its monopoly of power. Commenting in 1990, Peruvian novelist and Nobel Laureate Mario Vargas Llosa called this system “the perfect dictatorship.”⁴

During its first decades in power, the PRI carried out revolutionary change and engineered the Mexican miracle (Chapter 7). The 1968 Tlatelolco massacre, in which troops killed hundreds of striking students, revealed the regime's brutal side and began to undermine the PRI's legitimacy. Recurring economic problems, heightened and open corruption, and the blatantly fraudulent 1988 presidential election led to the PRI's first-ever loss of a state governorship in 1989. The 1990s brought another financial crisis, drug wars, political assassinations, and the largest popular insurrection since the 1920s—the 1994 uprising of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista National Liberation Army, EZLN—note the name) in the poor, largely Indian state of Chiapas (see below).

In response to these internal developments and to the region-wide tide of democratization, Mexico's political landscape underwent a profound change. Public pressure forced the government to reform the corrupt electoral system, and the PRI lost its majority in the federal Chamber of Deputies in 1997. After losing a third of the country's governorships and thousands of state legislative and municipal offices, it gave up the presidency to conservative Vicente Fox in 2000. By that year, a three-party system had emerged: The PRI represented the center, the Partido de Acción Nacional (National Action Party) the right, and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution) the left. The PRI recovered the presidency in 2012 but not its congressional majority. With its competitive three-party system and more transparent elections, Mexico joined the ranks of Latin America's democracies.

THE PINK TIDE

The precarious situation of Latin America's middle classes, workers, peasants, and marginalized slum dwellers did not go unnoticed. A number of voices arose in the 1990s to condemn neoliberalism, including those of populist politicians, Fidel Castro, and even conservative Pope John Paul II. The Latin American Council of Bishops condemned "economism," or "the absolutizing of market forces and the power of money, forgetting that the economy is to be at the service of the people and not the other way around."⁵ Having discovered the extent of poverty in the developing world, the World Bank by the turn of the century began recommending strong measures to reverse the damage done by the very neoliberal policies of which it had been a primary architect.

One of the salient political developments of the early twenty-first century has been the emergence of what is known as the "Pink Tide"—a number of leftist governments that came to power largely through their opposition to neoliberalism. Hugo Chávez, elected president of Venezuela in 1998, pioneered the Pink Tide. He was followed in 2003 by Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (known simply as Lula) and Argentina's Néstor Kirchner, by Uruguay's Tabaré Vázquez in 2005, Bolivia's Evo Morales in 2006, Ecuador's Rafael Correa and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega in 2007, and El Salvador's Mauricio Funes in 2009. Several of these men were succeeded by presidents of similar views.

These governments were more moderate than the three revolutionary regimes that took power in the era of the Cuban Revolution. Although they were often described, and some self-identified, as "socialist" or proponents of "twenty-first-century socialism," most did not nationalize the basic components of their countries' economies as occurred in Cuba, and to a lesser extent under the revolutionary governments of Peru, Chile, and Nicaragua. Rather, most of the new left leaders attempted to humanize neoliberalism, rather than vanquish it altogether, by initiating antipoverty, nutrition, housing, education, and other programs to establish a social safety net for as many of their citizens as possible. Yet, there is a direct connection between the era of the Cuban Revolution and the revival of the left. Four sitting presidents in 2015 were former guerrilla fighters: Uruguay's José Mujica was a Tupamaro, El Salvador's Salvador Sánchez Cerén a commander in the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN), Nicaragua's Ortega a Sandinista guerrilla and president during the Sandinista revolution, and Brazil's Dilma Rousseff a guerrilla fighter during the Brazilian military dictatorship.

Hugo Chávez, a colonel in the Venezuelan army, first achieved prominence as leader of a failed 1992 coup. Following a long tradition of dictatorship (Chapter 5), Venezuela's promising experiment in democracy, begun in 1958, had spiraled into a corrupt, elitist regime that had squandered much of the country's oil income and adopted the neoliberal formula in the late 1980s. Chávez's attempted coup aimed to replace that discredited regime with new principles vaguely called "Bolivarian," after the great liberator of South America and founder of Venezuela. Despite its failure,

the military uprising made Chávez popular among the country's poor majority and, following his 1994 release from prison, positioned him for a future in electoral politics.

That future came in 1998, when Chávez was elected president with 56 percent of the vote on a promise to clean house and adopt a new constitution. The following year, he got his constitution, which named the country the “Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela” and called for broad popular participation in governance. In 2000, he was elected to a six-year term under the new constitution and began a sustained attack on Venezuela's widespread poverty by enlisting the army to build housing, clinics, schools, and subsidized markets in the slums and in rural areas.

Four years later, Chávez formed the Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, ALBA), a trade and solidarity agreement initially with Cuba that later spread to other left-governed countries including Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and several small Caribbean islands. ALBA allowed him to intensify his social “missions,” as he named them, by trading oil for Cuban human capital—some twenty thousand medical personnel and teachers who were deployed to Venezuela's poorest areas. He also raised government oil royalties and invested heavily in education, nutrition, health, and literacy programs while agrarian reform benefited some 180,000 families, around half of the rural population. These programs reduced poverty up to 50 percent, by some estimates.

Chávez's authoritarian style was controversial, particularly to the business and conservative political groups that opposed his agenda. With its Bolivarian majority, the Congress in 2001 granted Chávez decree powers, which he used liberally. As opposition to his programs and powers grew and the privately owned media openly called for his replacement, a military coup briefly overthrew him in April 2002, but loyal army units and massive protests by his supporters turned the tide, and he was back in office forty-eight hours later. Washington denied backing the coup.



Hugo Chávez

Source: Agência Brasil

The opposition then turned to the new constitution's referendum provision to force a recall, but the president prevailed with 59 percent of the vote. Chávez continued to build his personal power, winning reelection in 2006 with 63 percent of the vote, forming his Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (United Socialist Party of Venezuela) the following year, and in 2009 winning a referendum to allow unlimited presidential reelections. The opposition and U.S. media began calling Chávez a dictator, despite international observers' validation of all the elections and referenda. The U.S. government was also spending some forty million dollars annually to shore up the opposition to a regime it considered increasingly hostile, even dangerous to U.S. interests. For his part, Chávez assailed "American imperialism" and called U.S. president George W. Bush "the devil."

Chávez was diagnosed with cancer in 2011, went to Cuba several times for treatment, and died in March 2013 after winning another presidential term in 2012. His preserved body lies in an impressive mausoleum with an eternal flame and a military guard. His vice president, Nicolás Maduro, succeeded him and won a six-year term in a narrow victory over opposition leader Henrique Capriles a month after Chávez's death. The outlook for Maduro was not rosy. Chávez was enormously popular with his base of poor Venezuelans; he had governed as a charismatic leader who developed a cult of personality and established relationships with his followers through his social programs and his Sunday television and radio show, "Aló Presidente" (Hello President). Thus, he had not needed to build institutions to translate his vision of participatory democracy and twenty-first-century socialism into concrete forms. Nor could he transfer his charismatic leadership to the new president, although Maduro constantly invoked Chávez's name and even claimed to sleep occasionally in the mausoleum in order to communicate with the late president. With falling oil prices beginning in 2014 and resulting shortages of consumer goods and increased unrest eroding his popularity, Maduro turned to heightened repression of the opposition. That opposition won two-thirds control of Congress in December 2015 and set about trying to terminate Maduro's presidency through a recall election. The future of Chávez's Bolivarian dreams hung in the balance.

Along with Evo Morales of Bolivia and Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Chávez represented the more radical, populist version of the Pink Tide. Brazil's Lula followed a more moderate, less flamboyant approach to humanizing neoliberalism. As the lengthy Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985) prepared to return governance to civilians and began to allow political activity, one of those taking advantage of the opening was Lula, who formed an independent labor union and, in 1980, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party). In 1990, Lula ran for president and lost. The victor, Fernando Collor de Mello, followed the Latin American trend by introducing neoliberal policies of austerity, lowered tariffs, and privatization of government-owned enterprises, which included the Volta Redonda steel plant built during the Vargas regime. The persistent Lula lost in the two subsequent elections and finally prevailed on his fourth try in 2002.

During his two presidential terms, Lula focused on dual goals: gaining Brazil an international status commensurate with the world's eighth largest economy and alleviating the country's endemic and widespread poverty. Internationally, he promoted Brazil's traditional exports as well as its new products, including ethanol and airplanes. He pushed unsuccessfully for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council but gave Brazil a prominent role in the new Group of Twenty (G-20), an international forum for major economies. Lula was instrumental in forming the Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC) group to give greater voice to large but underrepresented countries on the international stage. He boosted Brazil's prestige by paying off all its foreign debt in 2006. Finally, he lured the world's greatest sporting events to Brazil: the World Cup soccer tournament in 2014 and, for only the second time in Latin America, the Olympic Games in 2016.

Lula's war on poverty was a multipronged endeavor that included expanding social security and raising the minimum wage, but the centerpiece and most widely recognized element was the policy of making cash payments to families living below the poverty line. He launched the *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) program first to combat the malnutrition that accompanied poverty. Then he combined that program with one started earlier by his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, that paid cash to families for keeping their children in school and getting them vaccinated. The hybrid *Bolsa Familia* (Family Stipend) eventually reached some fourteen million families, accounting for nearly a quarter of Brazil's population. The combined approaches reduced poverty dramatically; government figures indicate that "extreme poverty" fell from 9 to 4 percent by 2012. Concurrently, graduation rates increased significantly owing to the powerful financial incentive for parents to school their children. Critics of the cash subsidy approach claim that it created attitudes of dependency and pointed out the potentially dangerous consequences of the program ending and returning millions to poverty. Nonetheless, the *Familia Bolsa* program was emulated in other Latin American countries.

Lula's former chief of staff and successor in 2010, Dilma Rousseff, the daughter of Bulgarian immigrants, continued most of Lula's international and domestic initiatives. She faced major popular protests in 2013 that, as is commonplace in Latin America, were initially aimed at price increases for public transportation. They escalated into a mobilization against poor public education and health services, corruption, and what many saw as excessive spending on new facilities for the World Cup and Olympic Games. Against this background, Rousseff barely won reelection in 2014 and continued to face the challenge of a faltering economy, growing corruption scandals, and hence popular opposition and low approval ratings. She was impeached and removed from office in 2016 and replaced by a conservative acting president. This development, along with the victory of conservative Mauricio Macri in Argentina's 2016 presidential election and the difficult challenges facing Venezuela's Maduro, suggested that the Pink Tide was becoming an ebb tide.



Dilma Rousseff

Source: Roberto Stuckert Filho

INDIGENOUS ACTIVISM

Among the notable developments since 1990 are the heightened awareness and activism among Latin America's, indeed the hemisphere's, native peoples. The 1992 quincentennial of Columbus's voyage of "discovery" was a catalyst for Indians to protest European imperialism and their continued marginalization under republican governments. Aided by the new forms of instantaneous communications, native groups from Chile to Alaska organized around the quincentennial theme. Much of the impetus came from Ecuadorian Indians, who had organized as the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE) in 1986. CONAIE held the First Continental Conference on 500 Years of Indian Resistance in 1990, attended by delegates from throughout the Americas.

In 1992, Spain celebrated Columbus's feat by hosting a universal exposition in Seville, newly linked to Madrid by high-speed rail, while in the Dominican Republic, Pope John Paul II commemorated the arrival of Christianity in the Americas. The same year, Guatemalan Indian Rigoberta Menchú received the Nobel Peace Prize for

her indigenous activism (Chapter 11). In the United States, several traditional Columbus Day parades were cancelled under threat of disruption, alternative parades featuring native themes were held, and Berkeley, California, renamed Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples Day. Native peoples marched, protested, and carried out hunger strikes in many Latin American countries. In Chile, native Mapuches accelerated the reoccupation of lands taken from them following their defeat by the national government in the 1880s, while the Ecuadorian natives became a militant force in national politics.

After years of frustration with their marginalization and poverty, Mayan Indians in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas organized as the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) and rose in rebellion on January 1, 1994. Not coincidentally, that was the day that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which links Mexico with the United States and Canada in a free trade zone, took effect, threatening to further impoverish the Maya farmers facing competition from more efficient U.S. agricultural producers. Led by a non-Indian, Subcomandante Marcos, the rebels captured the state capital, San Cristóbal de las Casas; skirmished briefly with government forces; then settled into a protracted war that relied more on websites than bullets.

The EZLN's program soon expanded from economic grievances to include broad claims of rights and identity for all of Mexico's indigenous groups, some 10 percent of the country's population. Rejecting the historic approach that promoted assimilation of native peoples, not only in Mexico but throughout Latin America, and reflecting the new consciousness of native identity manifest in the 1992 quincentenary, the EZLN demanded autonomy and self-determination along with land rights for Indians. The 1996 San Andrés Accords negotiated with government representatives reflected the Zapatistas' key demands: "A judicial framework that establishes a new relationship between indigenous peoples and the State, based on their right to self-determination and the judicial, political, social, economic and cultural rights that obtain from it."⁶ However, President Ernesto Zedillo failed to submit the accords to Congress for ratification and the conflict in Chiapas simmers to this day.

The rise of Indian consciousness and militancy led to a different outcome in Bolivia, Latin America's only majority-Indian country. In 2005, Bolivians elected an Aymara Indian, Evo Morales, as president. Morales had been leader of the federation of coca growers' organizations that strongly opposed U.S. efforts to suppress cultivation of the coca leaf that yields cocaine but is also a traditional Andean product with important cultural significance. He was sworn in as president in two ceremonies: the traditional inauguration in La Paz and an indigenous ceremony at a native religious site.

Morales, one of the more militant Pink Tide leaders, took office determined to institutionalize Bolivia's native heritage. Thus, while nationalizing important sectors of the economy and restarting the agrarian reform that had originated in the 1952 revolution (Chapter 8), he also pushed for a new constitution. Enacted in 2009, it created the "Plurinational State of Bolivia." The constitution defines indigenous



Evo Morales

Source: Valter Campanato

peoples as “every human collective that shares a cultural identity, language, historic tradition, institutions, territory and world view, whose existence predates the *Spanish colonial invasion*” (italics added). Among defined indigenous rights are self-determination, collective ownership of land (the *ayllu*), cultural identity, religious beliefs, and practices and customs.⁷ The constitution also allowed for presidential reelection, and Morales was easily reelected in 2009 and 2014.

The Columbus quincentennial, the rise of Indian militancy, and other developments in the Americas contributed significantly to the adoption in 2007 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

WOMEN ADVANCE

In recent decades, women have made their greatest strides in politics since achieving suffrage. Two women had served as presidents prior to 1990: Isabel Perón (1974–1976), Juan Perón’s vice president, succeeded him upon his death (Chapter 8); and Lidia Gueiler Tejada served eight months as Bolivia’s interim president (1979–1980). Latin America’s first elected woman president was Violeta Chamorro of Nicaragua (1990–1997), followed by Mireya Moscoso of Panama (1999–2004), Michelle Bachelet of Chile (2006–2010 and 2014–2018), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina (2007–2015), Laura Chinchilla of Costa Rica (2010–2014), and Dilma Rousseff of Brazil (2010–2016). There seems to be no pattern of political orientation among the women presidents, as they have come from their countries’ right, center, and left parties and coalitions. Notably, three of these presidents were elected to second terms. Women have also made inroads in serving as cabinet members, holding roughly one-fourth of Latin America’s total in 2015.

In 1991, Argentina became the world’s first country to enact a gender quota law requiring that a fixed percentage of all political parties’ candidates for the national Congress be women. In the following quarter century, the Argentine innovation has

spread, making Latin America the world's region with the greatest concentration of such laws. Quotas range from 50 percent in Bolivia to a low of 20 percent in Paraguay; in 2015, only Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba had not enacted gender quotas. Women's officeholding at the congressional level has strongly benefited from the quotas: In 1979, women held less than 1 percent of national legislative seats; in 2012, they held 19 percent, ranging from a high of 45 percent in Cuba (among freely elected congresses, 40 percent in Nicaragua) to a low of 4 percent in Haiti. In 2015, women held one quarter of all congressional seats, making Latin America the region with the highest percentage of women in national legislatures, narrowly edging Europe. For comparison, women held 19 percent of the seats in the U.S. Congress in 2015. A majority of Latin American countries have also adopted quotas for women in provincial and local elections, and numerous political parties have enacted voluntary quotas for their nominations.

Observers attribute this dramatic change in women's representation in national legislatures to both domestic and external forces. The United Nations' World Conferences on Women were influential; the fourth, held in Beijing in 1995, explicitly called for gender quotas in its "Platform for Action." Within Latin America, the adoption of quotas was part of the move to consolidate democracy following the period of heightened repression and state terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s. Article 28 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter of 2001 requires member states to "promote the full and equal participation of women in the political structures of their countries as a fundamental element in the promotion and exercise of a democratic culture."⁸ Ensuring that women were well represented, it was believed, would help to legitimize the democracies emerging from the turbulent period, to make them more inclusive, and to incorporate women's qualities of compassion, nurturing, and honesty for the common good.

While advancing politically, Latin American women still shouldered the traditional burdens of their gender, some of which appear to be universal while others are peculiar to Latin America. They still trailed men in income and job security and were rarely found in the upper echelons of corporations or large companies—women held only 3 percent of such positions in Chile in 2014, for example. Violence against women continues to be a major issue. The still-unsolved murders of hundreds of women since 1993 in and around Ciudad Juárez, Mexico—most of them young women working in assembly plants or *maquiladoras*—is a bitter reminder that to some, women's lives have little value. Latin America is the world's region with the highest rate of murders of women. Between 2007 and 2015, sixteen Latin American countries enacted "femicide" laws making the murder of women a legally defined crime. But enforcement has been spotty owing to the difficulty of establishing motive and to many women's ignorance of their rights to protection from abuses that may culminate in murder.

Another severe burden on women is the prohibition of abortion, which is absolute in five countries: Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Chile. In El Salvador, where abortion is banned without exceptions, the law is strictly

enforced; even miscarriages are sometimes considered murder. At least seventeen women were serving prison sentences of over thirty years in 2014 for violating the abortion law, which human rights organizations and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights strongly oppose.

At the same time, new opportunities have opened to women. As a result of urbanization, better access to health care, and women's empowerment, Latin America's birthrate has declined dramatically. In 1960, Latin American women bore 6 children on average; in 2010, they produced only 2.2 children. With smaller families to raise, women have more chance than before to pursue education, develop their talents, and work in a greater variety of occupations—all of which can open avenues of social mobility. Yet, several of the occupations that can lead to upward mobility are still largely male domains: sports, military service, and the illegal drug business.

GAYS AND LESBIANS EMERGE

As in most of the world, homosexuals in Latin America were historically closeted. During the colonial period, gay sex was illegal, and violators were subject to trial by the Inquisition. Little changed before the mid-twentieth century, by which time most large cities had bars or night clubs where gays and lesbians could meet discreetly but still encountered police harassment. In revolutionary Cuba, gays were stigmatized as “counterrevolutionaries” and, until the late 1960s, were often sent to forced labor camps as punishment.

The first known Latin American gay organization, *El Grupo Nuestro Mundo* (Our World Group), was formed in Buenos Aires in 1969 and changed its name two years later to the Argentine Homosexual Liberation Front. Just as gay and lesbian organizing began in the United States and Europe, however, the Latin American political climate turned reactionary (Chapter 11), making public displays dangerous. The pioneering Argentine organization succumbed to that climate, disbanding in 1975. The first gay pride parade occurred in Mexico City in 1979; with the resurgence of democracy in South America in the 1980s, organizing resumed and pride parades spread. The movement for gay rights was boosted by the International Lesbian and Gay Association, which held its first non-European conference in Mexico City in 1991 and its second in Rio de Janeiro in 1995. Today, gay rights are on the political agenda throughout Latin America.

Substantial progress has been made on issues important to lesbians and gays in the twenty-first century as activists have successfully linked gay rights to the widespread effort to strengthen human rights, in reaction to the state terrorism and general repression of the 1970s and 1980s. Numerous cities, states, and countries have adopted antidiscrimination laws. The city of Buenos Aires enacted Latin America's first civil union law in 2002. Colombia followed in 2007, Ecuador in 2009, and Chile in 2015. In December 2009, Mexico City became Latin America's first jurisdiction to legalize gay marriage; Argentina enacted marriage equality in 2010, followed by



São Paulo Gay Pride Parade, 2014
Source: Ben Tavener

Uruguay and Brazil in 2013. In June 2015, a Mexican court ruled state bans of same-sex marriage unconstitutional, in effect legalizing it throughout the republic. Colombia enacted a same-sex marriage law in 2016. Pride parades have become common; the annual event in São Paulo is one of the world's largest. There is still much resistance to granting homosexual rights, and little has changed in Central America to date. But the international trend of recognizing homosexuals as equal citizens has had a significant impact in Latin America.

DECLINE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The colonial legacy of a powerful, monopolistic Roman Catholic Church has eroded significantly in the last few decades. The church lost its formal monopoly of formal religion in the nineteenth century all across Latin America, but remained the declared religion of almost all people of the region. Even in Mexico, where the church's power and wealth were vigorously attacked during La Reforma in the 1850s and again during the 1910 revolution, most people remained true to the church. By 1970, according to the Pew Trust, which conducted over thirty thousand face-to-face interviews across the region, the number of professed Catholics had slipped to 92 percent. However, the greatest decline in Catholicism has occurred in the past forty-five years: In 2014, while the region as a whole was home to around 450 million Catholics, nearly 40 percent of the world's total, Pew found that only 69 percent of Latin Americans professed Catholicism.⁹

The rise of Protestantism and secularism are primarily responsible for the precipitous decline of Roman Catholicism. Protestantism has made major inroads: In 1970, only 4 percent of Latin Americans identified as Protestant, a number that rose

to 19 percent in 2014. Less than half of the populations of Honduras and Uruguay reported being Catholic. Protestants accounted for only 7 percent of Paraguayans, but 40 percent or more in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, with El Salvador trailing at 36 percent. Most of the new Protestants are evangelical.

Asked why they had converted to Protestantism, the greatest number responded that they sought a more personal connection with God, followed by those who enjoyed the style of worship. Protestants are also aggressive in recruiting, with several sects dispatching missionaries from the United States. The greatest successes in conversion have been among the poor, who find that their coreligionists form a community that helps to provide a social safety net lacking outside the churches. Rejection of alcohol by many of the evangelical groups appeals especially to women, whose husbands—if they are faithful to the doctrine—do not blow their paychecks on a night of drinking rather than contributing to the family budget.

Secularism, or the “detestable pest of indifferentism” as Pope Pius IX described it in condemning the 1857 Mexican constitution (Chapter 3), poses another threat to the Catholic Church. In a scientific age when there are alternate explanations for natural disasters and debilitating diseases besides the will of God, the church has a weaker hold on the better-educated populace. Secular pursuits such as sports, movies and television, and long working hours compete with mass and confession for people’s time. Thus, it is likely that a substantial percentage of those who declare themselves Catholic are only nominally so.

Despite these challenges, the Catholic Church remains powerful. When bishops and archbishops articulate their views, many people are influenced. One of the most salient examples of continuing church power involves the matters of abortion and divorce. Where it exists, the strict prohibition of abortion has church backing, and church opposition slowed the legalization of divorce in most Latin American countries.

Developments in Mexico and Cuba have been positive for the Catholic Church. In a dramatic reversal of course, Mexico’s 1917 constitution was amended in 1992 to strike most of its anticlerical provisions whose enforcement roiled the country in the 1920s (Chapter 7). Those amendments allow churches to own property, legalize church schools and monastic orders, end the ban on foreign clergy, and permit religious celebrations outside of church buildings. Mexico also ratified a concordat with the Vatican, restoring relations that had been broken since the time of Benito Juárez and *La Reforma*. In Cuba, where the church had been repressed under the Castro government, relations thawed as three successive popes visited the island between 1998 and 2015. Church and state began holding regular dialogues, Christmas and Easter were restored as national holidays, and permission was granted for the construction of new churches.

Some believe the Catholic Church may benefit from the papacy of the first Latin American pope, former Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina, a Jesuit who took the highly symbolic name Francis when consecrated as pope in March 2013. On visits to Brazil in 2013, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, and Cuba in 2015, and

Mexico in 2016, he delivered his message of humility and service to the poor before huge and enthusiastic crowds.

CUBA IN TRANSITION

Developments clustering between 1989 and 1991 signaled the end of Cuba's long-standing, outsized influence in Latin America. The fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union deprived Cuba of its primary allies and crucial economic support. The West's victory in the Cold War pressured Castro to conform to Western norms of democracy and human rights. Having placed the United States and Latin America's elites and armed forces on the defensive in the early years of his revolution, Castro found himself in that same position thirty years later. The issue now was the very survival of his increasingly anachronistic regime.

After three decades of limited success at diversification, Cuba still relied heavily on sugar, which beginning in the early 1990s had to compete in the world market without the Soviet subsidy. The economy contracted by a third between 1989 and 1993, and Castro responded to this severe blow to an already austere economy by proclaiming a "special period in peacetime" and evoking the familiar calls to sacrifice for the revolution. He also instituted economic reforms, including modest openings for private small businesses and legalization of the use of dollars. Bypassed earlier by the spectacular growth of Caribbean tourism, Cuba opened up in the 1990s to controlled foreign investment in beach resorts: From two thousand hotel rooms and three airlines serving the island in 1989, Cuba boasted thirty thousand rooms and forty-seven airlines a decade later—and the expansion has continued, fueled by tourists from Europe and Canada. Hard currency also flowed in from the by-products of Cuba's excellent health care system, including medical tourism, and from remittances from family members in the United States.

Castro successfully met the challenge of establishing international legitimacy for his Communist state in the post-Soviet world. By the end of the 1990s, almost all Latin American countries had reestablished diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba despite the country's continued suspension from the OAS. Rather than calling for the overthrow of their governments, Castro hobnobbed with presidents and prime ministers at international conferences. Beginning in the early 1990s, the United Nations annually condemned the United States for continuing the trade embargo formalized in 1962. But while relations with the rest of the world normalized, the chill between Havana and Washington grew deeper. The 1992 Cuban Democracy Act and the 1996 Helms–Burton Act sought to slow the influx of Western capital that had begun to undermine U.S. sanctions. These laws also codified the embargo, heretofore based on presidential discretion, as law, and prohibited lifting it until a certifiably democratic, post-Castro government was in place.

In declining health, Castro surprised the world by stepping down from the presidency in 2008 at age 81. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Raúl Castro,

a veteran of the Sierra Maestra and Castro's second in command over the decades. More pragmatic than Fidel Castro, Raúl began instituting a series of market-oriented reforms designed to improve living standards and stanch the flow of thousands of Cubans who abandoned the island in search of better lives abroad. To create a mixed state-private economy, the government announced its intention to reduce government employment, which still amounted to nearly 100 percent of Cubans, by 20 percent. Areas for legal private business expanded, and Cubans opened thousands of small shops, restaurants, and services, including renting rooms to tourists in private homes. A real estate market opened, allowing individuals to buy and sell houses and apartments. And in partnership with foreign capital, important infrastructural improvements were undertaken, including a deepwater port at Mariel. Personal freedoms are still restricted, but Cubans with the means to do so can now travel abroad without permission, and several Cuban baseball players have joined the U.S. major leagues with Raúl's blessing.

Salvation through economic innovation has carried a high and growing price since it began in the early 1990s. The basic tenet of the revolution, egalitarianism, has given way to a glaring division in Cuban society between those with access to dollars or euros—and thus to consumer goods—and those without, who still depend on low-paying state jobs and the ration card. Medical doctors and university professors are drawn to taxi driving and food serving in order to enter the hard-currency economy. Reports indicate that the vices associated with Cuba's prerevolutionary tourist economy, such as prostitution and street crime, have returned. While most Cubans appear to support the recent changes, there is a deep fear that exiles may return some day and, supported by capitalist law, reclaim their properties and businesses and reestablish the old order.

Under Presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro, relations have thawed in ways that were unthinkable just a few years earlier. Following eighteen months of talks brokered by Pope Francis, in December 2014, the two announced the resumption of full diplomatic ties severed in 1961. Despite vehement objections from Republicans in the U.S. Congress, Obama and Castro pushed forward and reopened the shuttered embassies in July 2015. President Obama made a state visit to the island in March 2016, where he stated: "I have come here to bury the last remnant of the Cold War in the Americas."¹⁰ Following the easing of restrictions on U.S. tourism to Cuba, commercial flights linking the two countries resumed in August 2016.

According to polling, this rapprochement is strongly supported by Cubans and by the U.S. public, including Cuban Americans, whose U.S.-born younger generations support good relations with the island rather than the adamant anti-Castro position of their elders. It was also well received in Latin America. The next step in normalizing relations—lifting the embargo—faced the likely obstacle of opposition in the U.S. Congress which, thanks to the two laws of the 1990s, must approve the measure if the current Cuban political system remains in place—as Raúl has emphatically vowed that it will.

The icon of the Cuban Revolution and hero of the Latin American left, Fidel Castro, died on November 25, 2016, at the age of ninety. Time will be needed to determine the impact of his passing on Cuba and on U.S.-Cuban relations.

Latin America since 1990 has continued to experience both change and continuity. The advent of neoliberalism reversed the state-driven economic model adopted during the Great Depression. The Pink Tide, a resurgence of the left based on opposition to neoliberalism, gained power in several countries but by mid-2016 had lost momentum. Democratic governments replaced the repressive regimes of the era of the Cuban Revolution, and military influence in politics declined. Indigenous peoples throughout the hemisphere mobilized for change; under Aymara president Evo Morales, Bolivia became a “Plurinational State.” Women made strides in politics, winning the presidencies of six countries by 2010 and holding a growing number of cabinet positions and seats in national legislatures. Lesbians and gays gained visibility and rights in several venues. The percentage of Latin Americans claiming fealty to Catholic Church reached a new low. Finally, Cuba struggled to adapt to the post-Soviet world and, in 2014, reestablished diplomatic relations with the United States after sixty-three years.

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Reflections on the Colonial Legacies, 1990–Present

Latin America has experienced a dramatic reversal of the near-universal, often extreme authoritarianism of the era of the Cuban Revolution. Since 2000, all of Latin America except Cuba and Haiti has experienced democratic governance. The rise of democracy was in large measure a reaction to the prevalence of repressive dictatorships, including those that governed by state terrorism. The legacy of authoritarian governance has not disappeared altogether, as strong presidents have dominated governments in several countries. But with the armed forces refraining from overthrowing elected governments, with very few exceptions, Latin America appears to be evolving beyond the colonial legacy of authoritarian governance. Time will tell whether this era of democratic governance will become permanent.

The recent period has seen change in the legacy of a rigid social hierarchy. Mobilized by the Columbus quincentenary, Indians throughout the Americas challenged vestiges of European imperialism that continued to afflict them, demanding respect, rights, and autonomy. The only substantive change, however, occurred in Bolivia where Aymara president Evo Morales took both concrete and symbolic measures to benefit the country's Indian majority. Women progressed in politics, moving beyond the stage of participation to that of holding important elected offices, including presidencies in six countries and a quarter of all seats in national legislatures. Yet, exploitation of and violence against women continue. Historically repressed gays and lesbians emerged from the shadows and gained legal protections in some countries, including marriage equality in a few. While widespread poverty and income inequality persist, reinforcing the inherited social hierarchy, some new avenues of individual mobility have opened.

After struggling in the aftermath of the Great Depression to overcome economic dependency, with limited success, Latin America has fallen back into the grip of this colonial legacy. As a result of the world recession of the 1980s and the accumulation of excessive external debt, the Latin American countries were forced to relinquish control of their economic policies to the international lending agencies. The imposition of neoliberal policies gave rise to the “Pink Tide” of leftist governments that challenged the new economic order, with mixed results.

The colonial legacy of the large landed estate has continued into the new millennium. Agrarian reform resumed in Venezuela and Bolivia; but in Mexico, where agrarian reform was a central tenet of the revolution, land distribution stopped and the collective landholding entity, the *ejido*, was privatized. The accelerating urbanization of Latin America continued the shift of political power to the cities and reduced the prospects of meaningful agrarian reform as urban priorities outweighed the rural poor’s desire for land. Meanwhile, foreign and domestic agribusiness companies appropriated large holdings in several countries to produce commodities for export, further entrenching the large landed estate in a new form.

The Catholic Church experienced declining influence as its hold over Latin Americans has slipped since 1990. Beset by secularism and competition from Protestants, the Catholic Church claimed the allegiance of only two-thirds of Latin Americans by 2014. But the lifting of restrictions on the church in Mexico and Cuba and the selection of a Latin American pope in 2013 brought some optimism about the church’s future.

Conclusion: Colonial Legacies and Today's Latin America

This book is a study in continuity and change. It poses the questions: How much, and in what ways, has Latin America changed over the last two hundred years? Conversely, what traits from the colonial period still persist? The sections titled “Reflections on the Colonial Legacies” that follow Parts II–VI of the book analyze these questions for each of the five chronological periods that Latin America has experienced since independence. Here, we offer some final thoughts about change and continuity in independent Latin America by focusing on the colonial legacies over the past two centuries.

On one level, Latin America has changed as the world has changed. Latin America communicates instantaneously by Internet, conquering at last a very challenging geography. Latin American poverty today involves material possessions and comforts—such as television, electric or gas appliances, and motor scooters—that Carolina Maria de Jesus could only dream of having. Latin Americans today are more literate and live longer than ever before. But our focus is on the question: How different from or similar to pre-independence Latin America is the same region today? Let us examine the colonial legacies one by one.

Authoritarian governance existed in much of what would become Latin America before the Europeans arrived; it was particularly evident in the Inca and Aztec empires. The Spanish and Portuguese recast authoritarianism in their own fashion, imposing hereditary monarchies theoretically wielding absolute power. In the decades following independence, liberals' efforts to restrain authoritarianism through constitutions, legislatures, and courts had little effect on this colonial legacy. During the era of the export economies (1870s–1930), the dictatorships embodied authoritarianism while the elected oligarchic governments were able to exercise elite power less heavy-handedly.

Authoritarianism waxed and waned throughout the twentieth century. Early working- and middle-class struggles targeted top-down rule, emphatically in the Mexican Revolution, but the Great Depression brought a resurgence of military rule. As populism took root in the 1930s and 1940s, many among the working and middle classes embraced authoritarianism, as exercised by Getúlio Vargas and Juan Domingo Perón, as the path to material welfare. Posing an existential threat to the Latin American elites, the Cuban Revolution had the unintended consequence of fostering a new wave of military authoritarianism in the 1970s and 1980s that delivered unprecedented levels of repression, including state terrorism in some countries. In reaction to this dark period, Latin America embraced democracy beginning in the 1980s. While authoritarian tendencies still surface, Latin America at present appears to be evolving beyond the legacy of authoritarian governance as institutionalized during the colonial period.

A *rigid social hierarchy* is another legacy of Latin America's long colonial period. During the half-century following independence, society changed as native-born men of European stock ascended to the top of the hierarchy. At the base, the abolition of slavery and termination of the Indian tribute in most countries offered degrees of freedom that neither group had known; yet, most men of color and women of all social ranks were denied citizenship. The era of the export economies complicated the social order, enriching portions of the elites, creating new working and middle classes, and definitively ending African slavery. Education and the job market opened to women in the more advanced countries. Indians living on the peripheries who had resisted Iberian domination were conquered and stripped of their lands while natives holding traditional communal land lost much of it, becoming in many cases a rural proletariat.

Following the Great Depression, industrialization fostered growth and empowerment of workers and industrialists in the larger countries, reducing the influence of traditional rural landowners. Revolution in Mexico and Bolivia gave the downtrodden peasantry land and the vote. The Cuban Revolution destroyed the inherited rigid social hierarchy in favor of an egalitarian model, and revolutionary governments in Peru, Chile, and Nicaragua sought to modify or end that legacy, with mixed results. After 1980, neoliberalism and economic downturns eroded working- and middle-class living standards, and since 1990 poverty levels have fluctuated. Latin America exhibited the world's highest income inequality, resulting in great distances between haves and have-nots. Although today's society is more complex and fluid than the inherited rigid social hierarchy, race, color, and gender are still the most important determinants of one's social standing.

The *powerful Roman Catholic Church* was ubiquitous and monopolistic in colonial Latin America. The status of the church was the first colonial legacy to become a prominent political issue following independence, as conservatives viewed the church as a bulwark of the colonial order they sought to preserve and liberals considered it an impediment to the progress they desired. Thus, the church was the focal point of liberal-conservative conflict well into the nineteenth century; as they

alternated in power, liberals took steps to weaken church power and conservatives adopted measures to restore the church to its colonial status. From *La Reforma* to the French Intervention to the 1917 constitution to the Cristero Rebellion, Mexico's struggles over the church were epic.

By the twentieth century, the status of the Catholic Church had been settled in most of Latin America. The church was no longer an important political issue, but it still spoke with a powerful and compelling voice. But fealty to the church began to erode late in the century and declined precipitously in the new millennium in competition with Protestantism and secularism. Hope rose for a Catholic revival with the lifting of restrictions on the church in Mexico in the 1990s and Cuba after 2000, and with the election of Pope Francis, Latin America's first pontiff. Nonetheless, the degree of power that the Catholic Church exercised in colonial Latin America is but a faint memory today.

Economic dependency resulted from the mercantilist economic systems that the Iberian monarchs imposed to benefit the home countries, not the colonies. By the late 1700s, Spain's and Portugal's monopolies of trade with their colonies had virtually broken down, and with independence they ended. This did not signify that the basic economic decisions were made in Latin America, however, as Britain quickly dominated the struggling new countries and set the terms of trade and investment. Participation in the first global economy from the 1870s to 1930 not only brought economic development, modernization, and political stability to most of the region, but it also brought negative consequences. Prices of raw material exports were set by market forces beyond Latin America's control, investment decisions were made in European and North American corporate board rooms, and foreigners appropriated many of Latin America's resources, deepening the existing dependency.

The Great Depression and collapse of the world economy elicited a nationalist reaction. The larger countries adopted import-substituting industrialization as a means of lessening reliance on raw material exports; but still lacking capital and technology, they were unable to escape dependency altogether. The 1980s and 1990s dealt heavy blows to the quest for economic independence. The debt crisis and economic recession of the 1980s resulted in the international lenders' imposition of neoliberal policies, forcing the Latin American countries to surrender national control of economic policy by the 1990s. The Pink Tide arose in reaction to neoliberalism, and leaders such as Hugo Chávez, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Lula), and Evo Morales challenged but did not escape the grip of the latest incarnation of economic dependency. The end of the commodities boom in 2011 and its negative impact on the region's economies confirmed the economic dependency that has been a constant in Latin America's history.

The *large landed estate* dominated the Latin American countryside at the time of independence, sharing it in some areas with native communal landholding villages and small farmers. The ensuing years further entrenched this pattern as cash-strapped governments sold state-owned and church holdings in large units to raise revenue. The large landed estates expanded further during the era of the export economies,

as land occupied by previously unconquered Indians fell under government control and was sold, and Indian communal lands from Bolivia to Mexico were appropriated for market-oriented production.

The large landed estate was first challenged in Mexico, where Emiliano Zapata doggedly pursued the breakup of haciendas and article 27 of the revolutionary 1917 constitution enshrined long-term agrarian reform. Destruction of haciendas and distribution of their land were at the core of the 1952 Bolivian Revolution. The Cuban Revolution made agrarian reform a burning issue in much of Latin America, and millions of landless peasants mobilized to demand land. After disappearing in Cuba, the large landed estate faced serious challenges in Peru, Chile, and Nicaragua, but the rise of reactionary regimes in the 1970s and 1980s halted or reversed agrarian reform. While Venezuela and Bolivia carried out land distribution after 1990, agribusiness appropriated large tracts of land to produce primarily for export. Thus modified in some areas, large landholdings continued to dominate rural Latin America in the early twenty-first century, and the shift of political power to the cities made any resumption of large-scale agrarian reform unlikely.

This review of the colonial legacies over time points to a mixed verdict on how and to what degree Latin America has changed since independence. The power of the Catholic Church has dissipated. Authoritarian governance has been tamed, although one would want to see more democratic consolidation before pronouncing it dead. While considerably altered over time, economic dependency and the large landed estate have withstood challenges and remain salient features of today's Latin America. The legacy of a rigid social hierarchy has been significantly modified, starting in the early postindependence years and continuing to the present. Although less rigid by far, today's society continues to display essential features of its colonial roots. Overall, then, we can conclude that while Latin America today is quite different from the Latin America of two centuries ago, continuity with the colonial past remains strong.

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