

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Other World Regions: Latin America



DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS AND KEY QUESTIONS

All information from Weatherby, et. al. (2018). *The Other World: Issues and Politics in the Developing World*. 10th Edition.

“[Latin] America is ungovernable, the man who serves a revolution plows the sea; this nation will fall inevitably into the hands of the unruly mob and then will pass into the hands of almost indistinguishable petty tyrants of every color and race.”

- Simon Bolivar



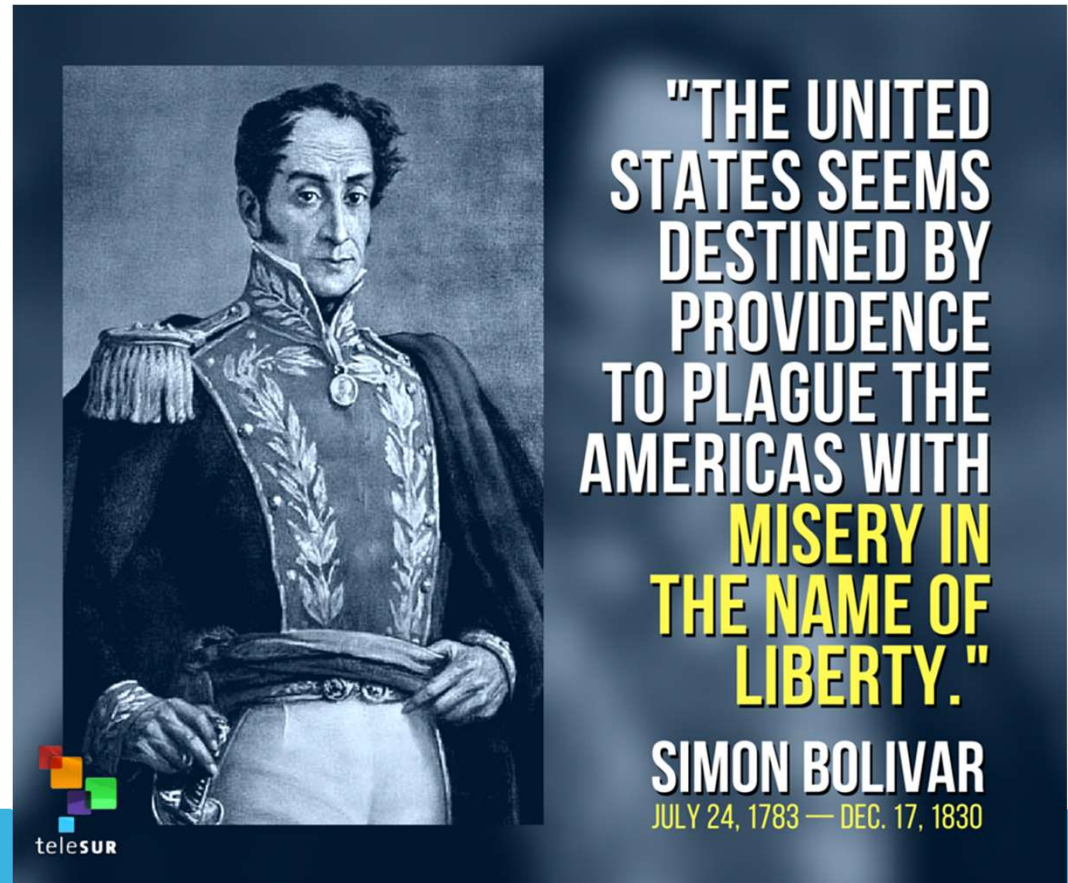
COMPARATIVE POLITICS

When Evo Morales first spoke of vast social change, many viewed him as a petty tyrant. And when residents of El Alto first clogged the city streets of La Paz, few doubted that mob rule had arrived...

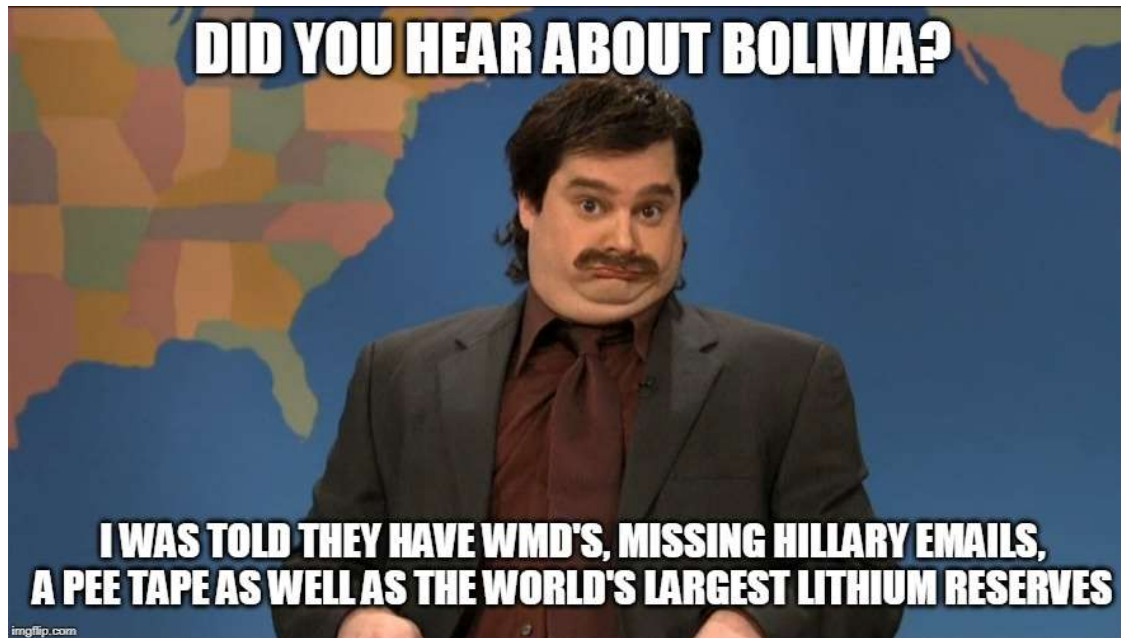


COMPARATIVE POLITICS

But it would
behoove Simon
Bolívar to see the
country that
bears his name
today.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS



Poverty and corruption remain paramount concerns, and it may be that Bolivia's economic growth has been all too dependent on a commodity boom.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

But to dismiss Bolivia or other countries in Latin America as inevitably ungovernable is not just an overstatement. It overlooks the dramatic social, political, and economic changes that have occurred over time.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Geography



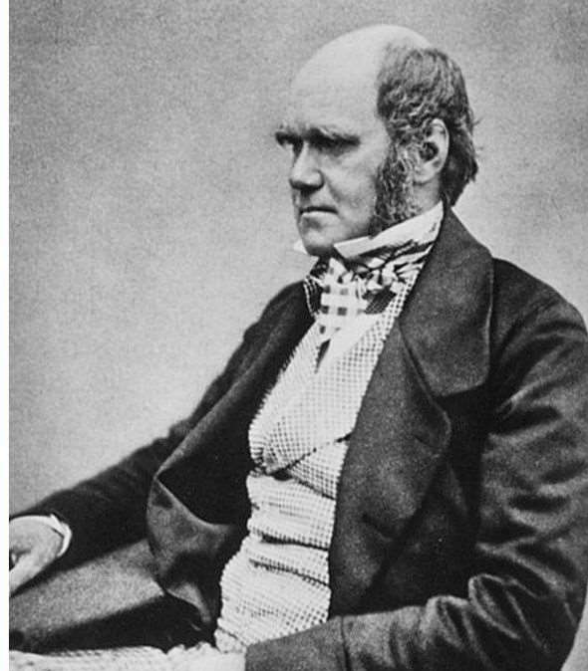
COMPARATIVE POLITICS



Latin America constitutes only 15 percent of the world's land mass, but the region stretches across nearly three-quarters of the globe in a north-south direction.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Latin America also boasts many unique natural characteristics (most famously, Charles Darwin did his landmark study on evolution in Ecuador's Galapagos Islands, which offer a variety of exceptional creatures and plant life).



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Of the ten most biodiverse countries in the world recognized by the United Nations Environment Programme, five sit in Latin America:



Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The entire continental United States could be placed within the Amazon River basin, which hosts the largest rainforest in the world.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS



South America is dominated by two natural features: the Andes and the Amazon River basin.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Natural disasters have been unfortunate byproducts of the expansive tropical areas as well as seismic activity in the volcanic regions.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, an estimated 6.6 million were affected by drought and about 2 million fled rising waters due to El Nino.

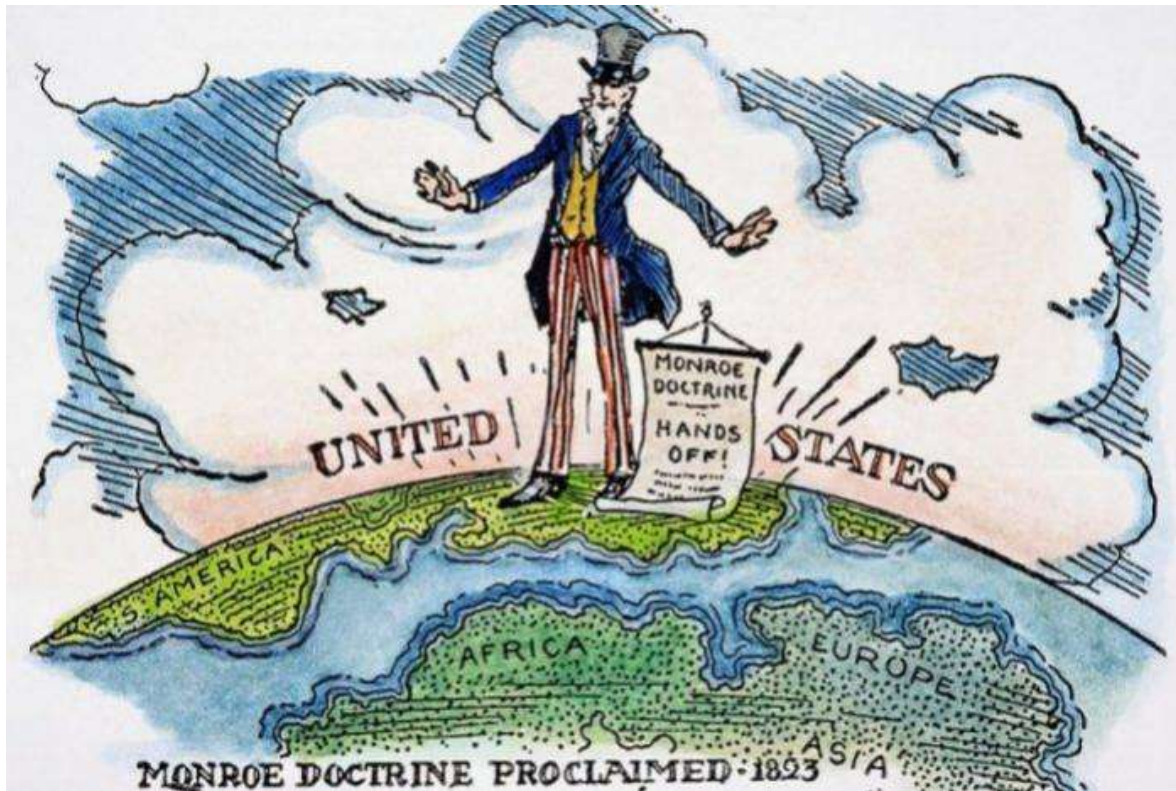


COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The political geography of Latin America has been more variable than many realize. Poorly documented colonial boundaries set the stage for dispute, and unstable governments both invited and ignited war.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS



The emergence of US hegemony in the 20th century stifled many incipient interstate wars, but earlier territorial movements have left bitter memories and stoked tensions that continue to this day.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

People and Culture



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

In dealing with an area of hemispheric proportion, we should not be amazed by the cultural and physiological variation among Indigenous peoples present when the first Europeans arrived.



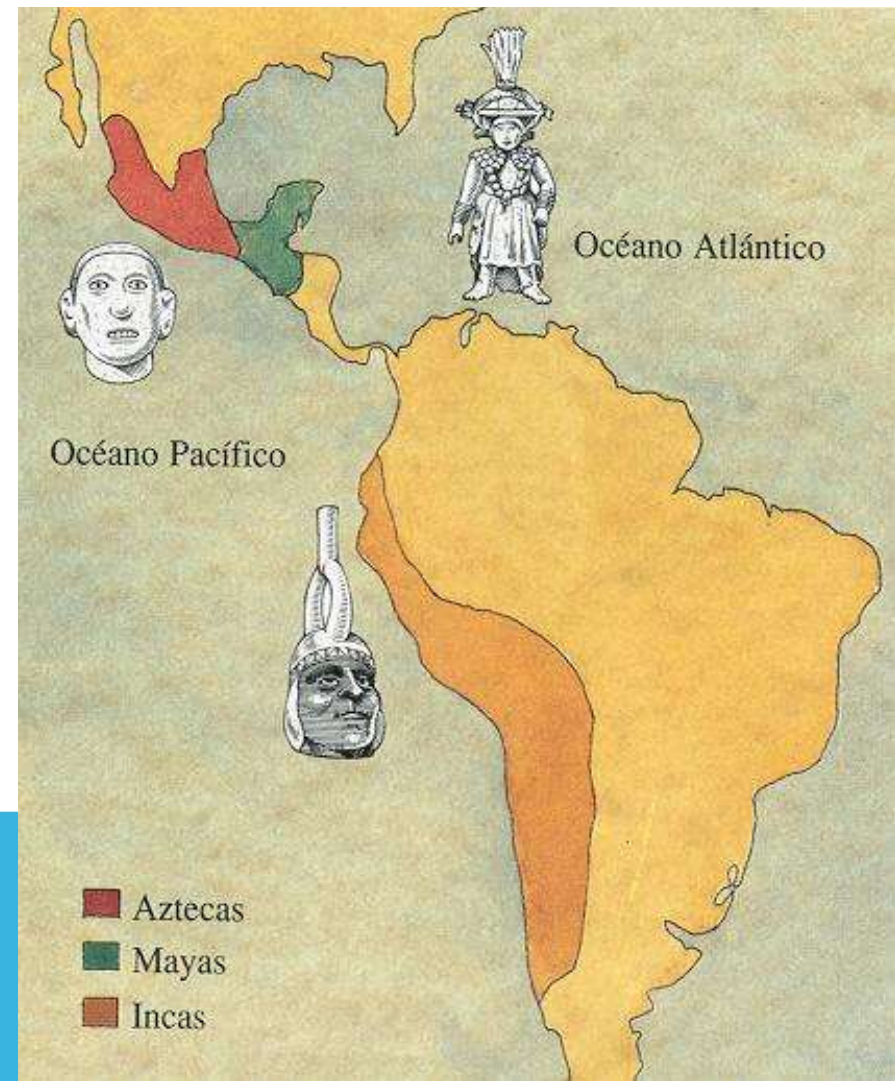
COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The debate over the size of Latin America's population at the time of the conquest rages on, numbers ranging from 12 million to upwards of 100 million.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Despite the disagreement, most studies place over 60 percent of the population within the Aztecs, Mayan, and Incan empires.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS



One indicator of the extent of cultural diversity is the number of languages found throughout the region.

In Mexico alone there were more than 200 different linguistic groups.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Today, the indigenous represent just 10 percent
Of the total population in the region, but their
numbers

are concentrated in
Bolivia, Ecuador,
Guatemala, Mexico,
and Peru, where

they constitute between
30 and 60 percent of
the population.



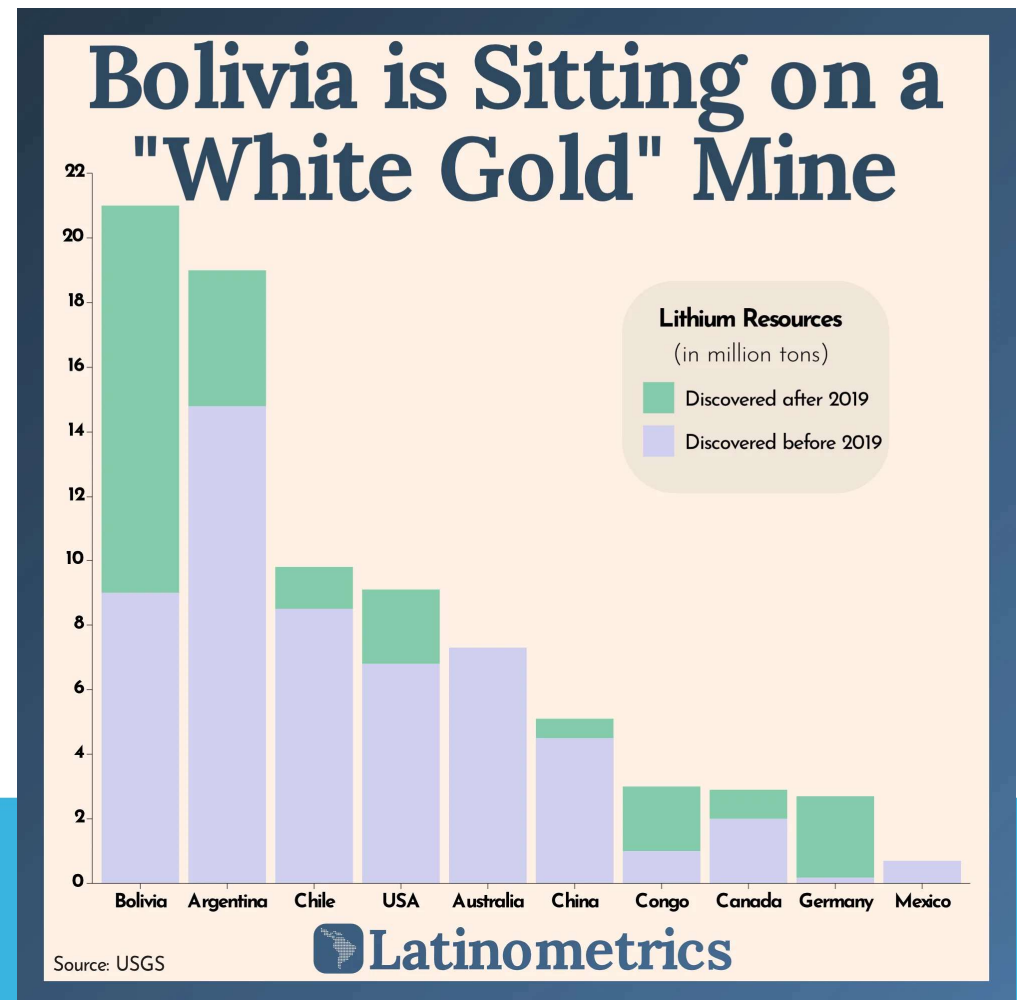
COMPARATIVE POLITICS



The demographic legacy of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism is clear in these countries.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Argentina sits on the other side of the demographic spectrum. Indigenous populations were historically lower here, as was European settlement due to the lack of mineral wealth.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Today, individuals of mixed European and indigenous blood, or *mestizos*, make up most of Latin America's population. The African populations have also mixed to create large mulatto groups. The result is a medley of peoples in the region, one that struggles to create a Latin American identity and come to terms with the issues of conquest and enslavement.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS



However, racial relations in Latin America have developed differently than in the United States.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

In Latin America, the widespread mixing of European, African, and indigenous peoples has produced a “constructivist” approach that embraces a more fluid ethnic identity based on cultural customs.



Indigenismo denies the biological basis of race and promotes culture and the arts as sources of identity.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

History

The Colonial Experience



The final hour of colonialism has struck, and millions of inhabitants of Africa, Asia and Latin America rise to meet a new life and demand their unrestricted right to self-determination.

— *Che Guevara* —

AZ QUOTES

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The *reconquista*, the 700-year battle to expel Islamic Moors from the Iberian Peninsula, set the stage for Spain's colonial expansion. Eager to consolidate political control, the monarchy looked to overseas resources through mercantilism.

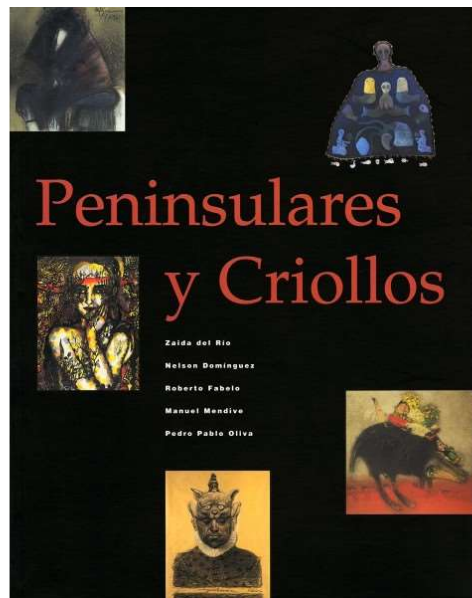


But, it didn't last, and Spain gradually deteriorated leading to:

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The Wars for National Independence

Spain reacted to its imperial decline by seeking to safeguard what it could, by allowing only *peninsulares*, or those born in Spain but sent to America, to hold the highest colonial offices. *Criollos*, of European blood but born in the New World were deemed less trustworthy.



Peninsulares and *criollos* sat atop a social hierarchy that placed *mestizos*, mulattos, and the indigenous – far below.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

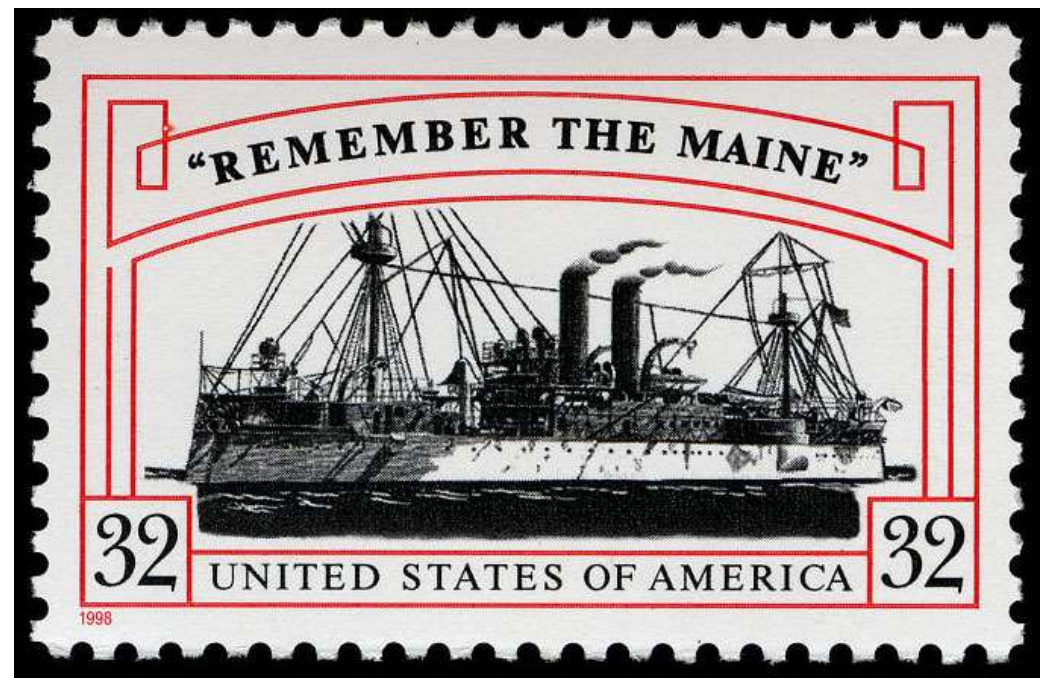
Postcolonial History and the Beginnings of US Involvement

Wars for independence exacted a heavy toll by reducing the civilian labor force and diverting machinery from industrial to military uses.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The US did not have much influence during this time. The Monroe Doctrine of 1823 is often presented as a bold policy, but some scholars argue it mostly fell on deaf ears in the region.



It was the Spanish-American War of 1898 which marked the true beginnings of US influence in the region.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

With the development of the Cold War in the late 1940s and the accompanying goal to contain communism, there was once again a tendency to justify intervention.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Economics

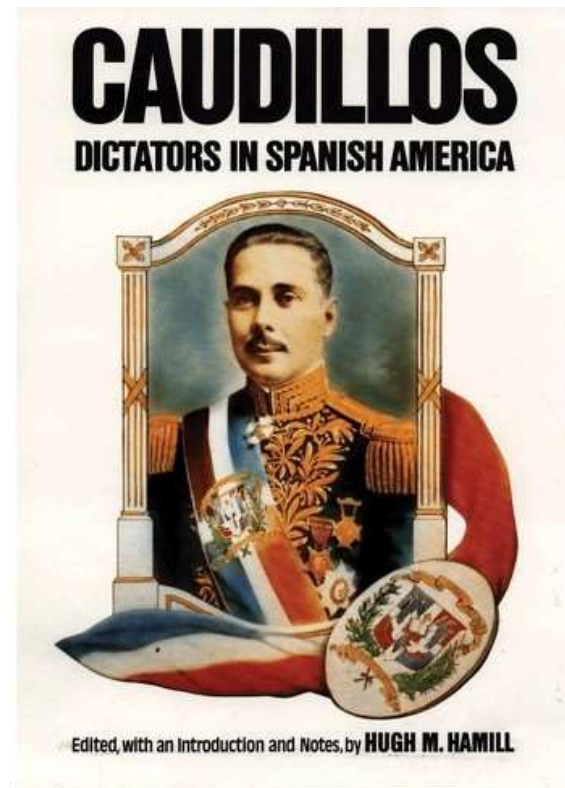


#AdobePost

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Mercantilism stifled early economic growth in Latin America. The long wars for independence and periods of *caudillo* rule interrupted economic opportunities in the 19th century.

Caudillos were military strongmen that often took power from the *peninsulares*.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The lack of a diverse entrepreneurial class or developed capital markets tended to push investment in a single direction and led countries to concentrate on exports within a few commodities or even just one.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

The global depression of the 1930s intensified the economic malaise and brought with it instability that saw militaries intervene in governments throughout the region.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

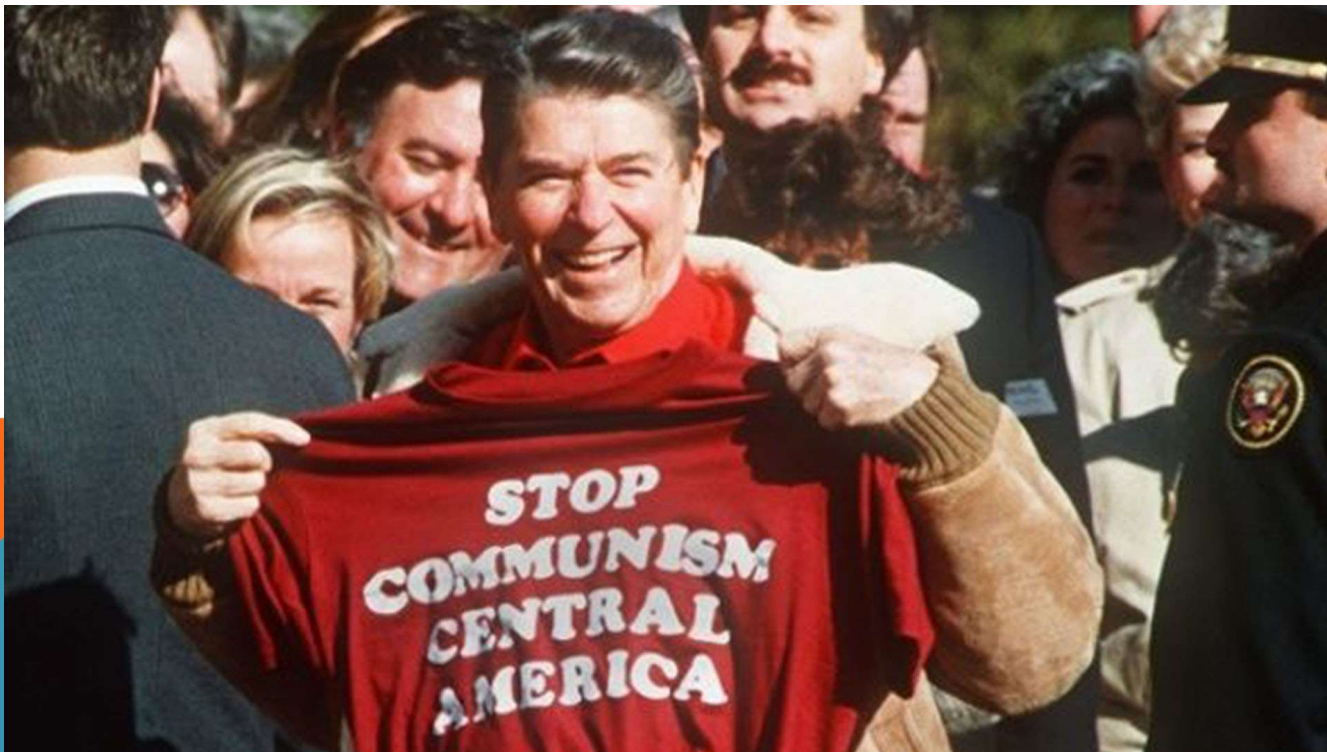
IMPORT SUBSTITUTION

- Import substitution is a trade policy aimed to promote economic growth by restricting imports that competed with domestic products in developing countries.
- The import substitution approach substitutes externally produced goods and services with locally produced ones.
- Import substitution can also be discussed as a policy strategy that attempts to utilize underused capacities, reduce regional unemployment or protect infant industries.

Latin America responded with import substitution industrialization (ISI) to create more diverse economies. But by the 1960s, the ISI model had been exhausted.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Militaries intervened attempting to dismantle the ISI system in the 1960s through the 1980s, but were unable to devise an alternative economic formula. They did have one advantage: they had impeccable anticommunist credentials!



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

1980 – 1990 “The Lost Decade”

Mexico defaults on it's debt in 1982 and many other Latin American countries follow...



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Lots of ups and downs in the economies of Latin America since the 1990s, but they actually weathered the 2008 global economic collapse pretty well, all things considered.

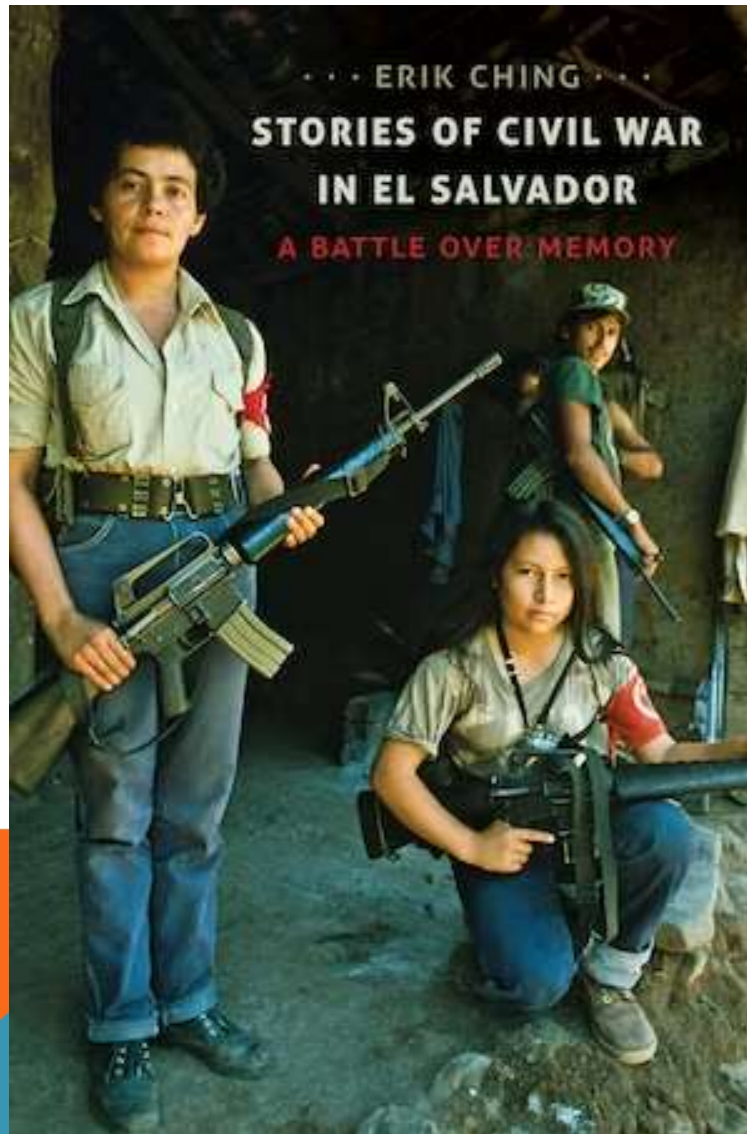


COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Government



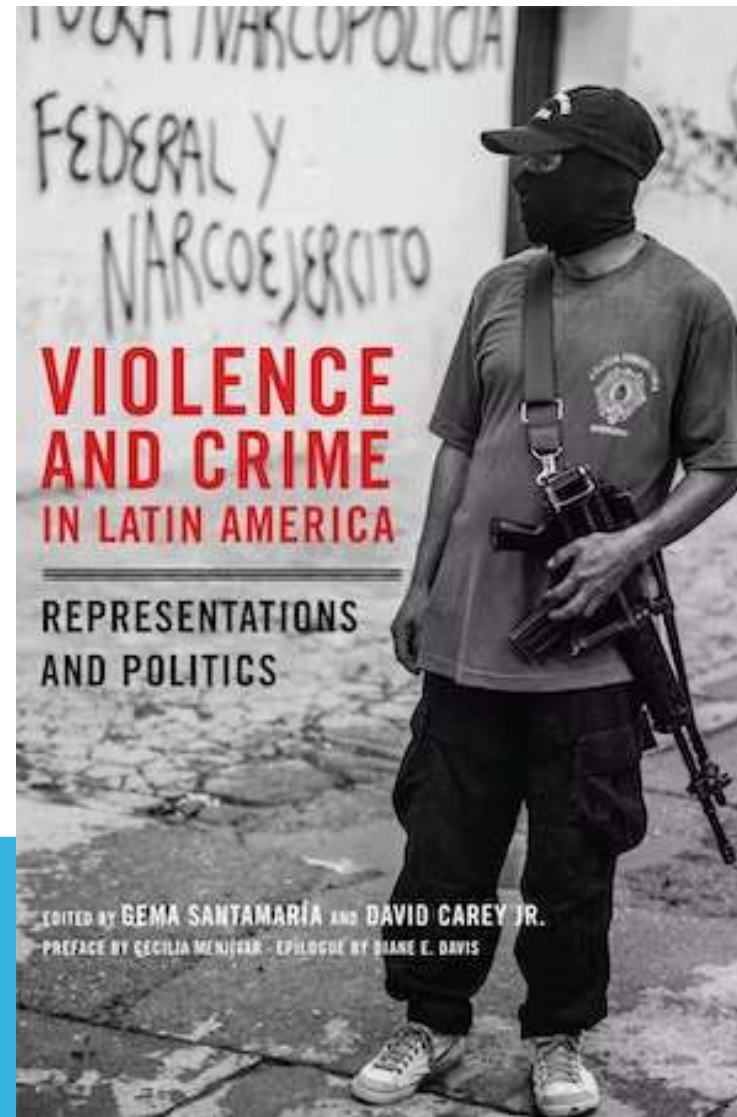
COMPARATIVE POLITICS



The military regimes of the 1960s to the 1980s left a traumatic legacy of human rights abuses. In some cases, the abuse was carried out within civil wars.

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

But recently the spotlight has moved from the military to the police in Latin America due to the region's unwanted distinction of being labeled the most violent in the world.



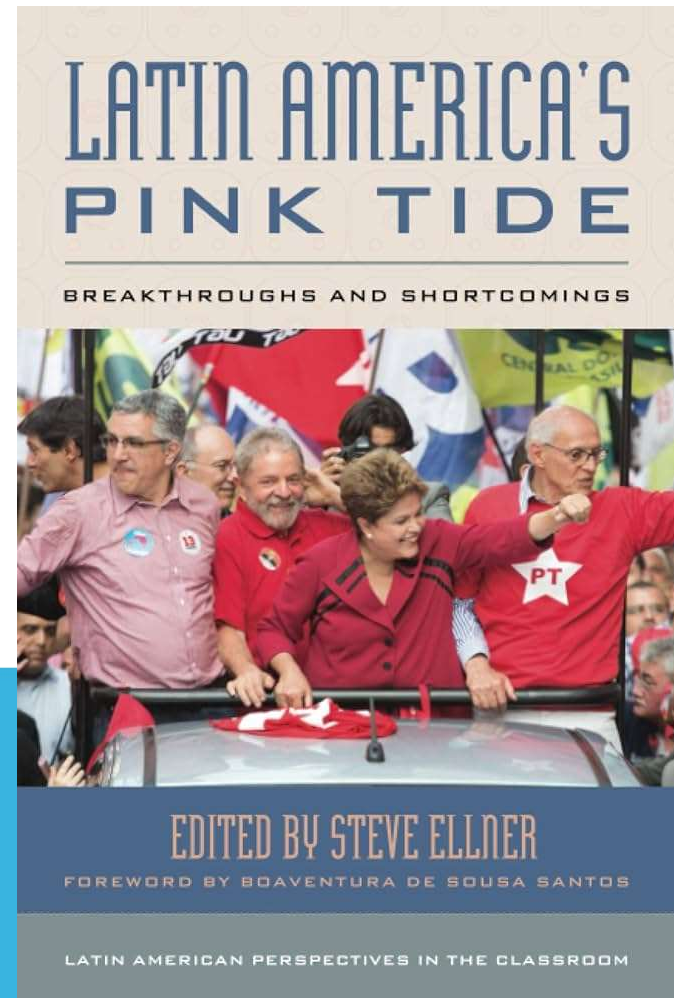
COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Organized crime is the primary cause of this, and it is especially destructive in a region known as the Northern Triangle – El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Gangs, or *maras* in Spanish, prey on everyday people through common crime, extortion, and forced recruitment.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Also noteworthy is the fact that the political landscape of Latin America has experienced a shift of late. At the start of the 21st century, many commentators spoke of a pink tide – a resurgence of populist, progressive politics keenly oriented toward criticism of US imperialism.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Militaries are certainly aware of this, but it appears that as Latin America works its way through a period of crisis and confrontation, the military is unlikely to upend civilian rule as they did in the past.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Concluding Thoughts and Questions



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Latin America holds the unenviable distinction of having been subject to colonial rule for a much longer period of time than that experienced in much of the Other World. Colonialism left long-lasting legacies that contributed to military rule, economic underdevelopment, corruption, and suspicion of outside powers.

Still, a fuller understanding of Latin America cannot be achieved by solely looking backwards!



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Globalization has brought both new challenges and new opportunities to the region. Migration and remittances remain as important as they have always been for many countries in Latin America, but migrants have also changed US society, culture, and politics.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS



The US remains a force to be reckoned with, but Latin American leaders no longer bend to every US foreign policy initiative.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Latin American economies remain vulnerable to outside investment flows and trade patterns, but they now have a greater variety of partners to lean upon.



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

But most importantly, countries in the region have gained some footing to allow them to experiment with policies of their own – from the Bolsa Familia to ecotourism to novel drug policy initiatives – that offer lessons to other countries in the Other World and beyond....



COMPARATIVE POLITICS

