

LESSON 4

Latin America

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can political change cause conflict?
- How can political relationships affect economic relationships?

READING HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

- consent
- target

Content Vocabulary

- privatization
- trade embargo
- cartels
- magic realism
- megacity

TAKING NOTES

Key Ideas and Details

Categorizing As you read, use a table like the one below to list significant events that happened in each country during the Cold War.

Country	Significant Events
Haiti	
El Salvador	
Nicaragua	
Chile	
Colombia	

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

After World War II, Latin American countries faced many economic, social, and political challenges. These challenges arose from a rise in population, a large foreign debt, and ongoing foreign military involvement.

General Trends in Latin America

GUIDING QUESTIONS *How did the involvement of the United States and the Soviet Union increase instability in Latin American countries? What economic and political challenges did Latin American countries face during the Cold War?*

Since the 1800s, Latin Americans have exported raw materials and bought manufactured goods from industrialized countries. The Great Depression caused exports to fall, and revenues to buy manufactured goods declined. In response, Latin Americans developed industries to produce their own goods.

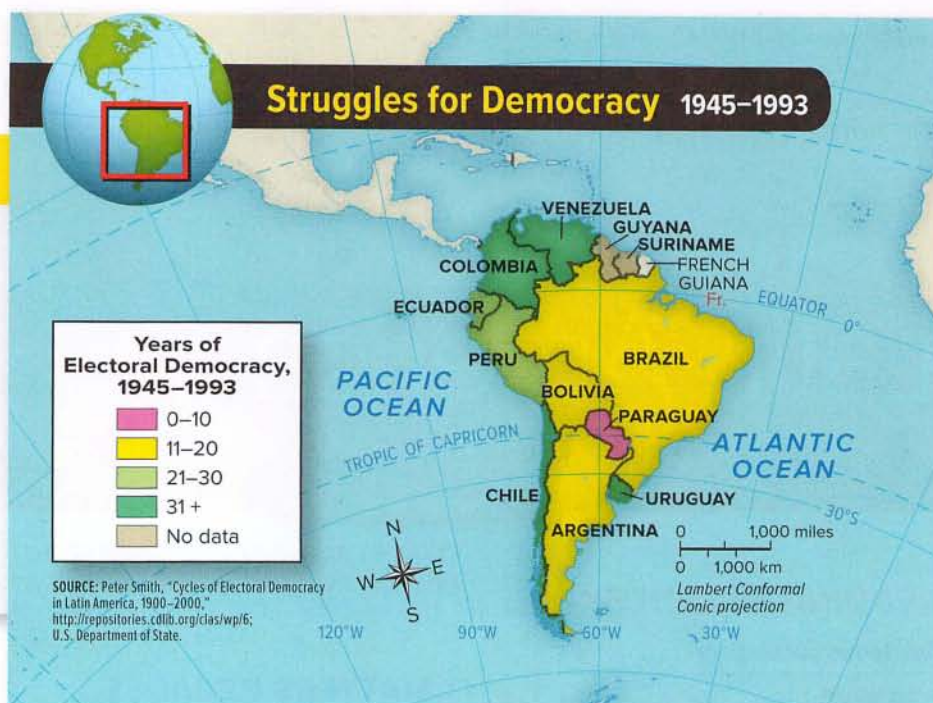
By the 1960s, however, Latin American countries were still experiencing economic problems. They depended on the United States, Europe, and Japan, especially for the advanced technology needed for modern industries. Also, many Latin American countries had failed to find markets abroad to sell their manufactured products.

These economic failures led to political instability. In the 1960s, repressive military regimes in Chile, Brazil, and Argentina abolished political parties and returned to export-import economies financed by foreigners. These regimes also encouraged multinational corporations (companies with divisions in more than two countries) to come to Latin America. This made these Latin American countries even more dependent on industrialized nations. In the 1970s, Latin American countries tried to maintain their weak economies by borrowing money. Between 1970 and 1982, debt to foreigners grew from \$27 billion to \$315.3 billion. A number of Latin American economies began to crumble. Wages fell, and unemployment and inflation skyrocketed. As the economy declined, people continued to move from the countryside into the cities.

GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

Latin American countries have moved toward democracy.

- 1 **PLACES AND REGIONS** *Of the countries shown on the map, which has experienced the longest period of electoral democracy?*
- 2 **THE USES OF GEOGRAPHY** *What problems did countries with little experience with electoral democracy face?*



A Move Toward Democracy

With the debt crisis in the 1980s came a movement toward democracy. Some military leaders could not deal with their nations' debt problems. At the same time, many realized that military power without popular **consent** could not maintain a strong state. As a result, a movement toward democracy was the most noticeable trend of the 1980s and the early 1990s in Latin America.

The United States has always played a large role in Latin America. In 1948 the states of the Western Hemisphere formed the Organization of American States (OAS), which called for an end to military action by one state in the affairs of any other state.

The formation of the OAS, however, did not end the interference of the United States in Latin American affairs. As the Cold War developed, so too did the anxiety of U.S. policy makers about the possibility of communist regimes in Central America and the Caribbean. As a result, the United States returned to a policy of taking action when it believed that Soviet agents were trying to set up governments hostile to U.S. interests.

After Fidel Castro created a Marxist state in Cuba, the desire of the United States to prevent "another Cuba" largely determined U.S. policy toward Latin America. In the 1960s, President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress encouraged social reform and economic development in Latin America. It was hoped that economic growth would keep people happy and less inclined to follow radical leaders. The Alliance for Progress failed to work, however. Much of the money intended for economic development ended up in the pockets of the rich.

When Cuba began to start guerrilla wars in other Latin American countries, the United States reacted by sending massive military aid to anti-Communist regimes, regardless of their nature. In the 1980s and 1990s, the United States returned to a policy of direct intervention in Latin American affairs.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining What was the Alliance for Progress, and why did it fail?

consent approval

Mexico and the Caribbean

GUIDING QUESTION *What economic and political challenges did Latin American countries face during the Cold War?*

Throughout the twentieth century, Mexico and the Caribbean have experienced political turmoil and economic crises.

Mexico

The Mexican Revolution in the early 1900s created a political order that remained stable for many years. The official political party of the Mexican Revolution—the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI—came to dominate Mexico. Every six years, leaders of the PRI chose the party's presidential candidate, who was then elected by the people. During the 1950s and 1960s, steady economic growth led to real gains in wages in Mexico.

At the end of the 1960s, student protests against Mexico's one-party government system led to change. Two presidents, Luis Echeverría and José López Portillo, made political reforms, and new political parties emerged. Greater freedom of debate in the press and universities was allowed.

In the late 1970s, vast new reserves of oil were discovered in Mexico. The government became more dependent on revenues from foreign oil sales. Then, when world oil prices dropped in the mid-1980s, Mexico was no longer able to make payments on its foreign debt. The government adopted new economic policies. One was **privatization**, the sale of government-owned companies to private firms.

President Carlos Salinas de Gortari sped up privatization to relieve the debt crisis. In 1992 de Gortari began working with the U.S. president and the Canadian prime minister to form the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It went into effect in 1994.

The Cuban Revolution

In the 1950s, an opposition movement arose in Cuba. It aimed to overthrow the government of the dictator Fulgencio Batista, who had controlled Cuba since 1933. The leader of the movement was a man named Fidel Castro. In 1954 Fidel and his brother Raúl teamed up with a small band of revolutionaries. As the rebels gained more support, the Batista regime collapsed. Castro's revolutionaries seized Havana on January 3, 1959. Many Cubans who disagreed with Castro fled to the United States.

Relations between Cuba and the United States quickly deteriorated when Castro's regime began to receive aid from the Soviet Union. In October 1960, the United States declared a **trade embargo** with Cuba. Just three months later, all diplomatic relations with Cuba were broken.

After the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis, Cuba became less dependent on the Soviet Union and pursued a new strategy of fomenting revolution in the rest of Latin America. Although Cuba's strategy failed, Castro's Marxist regime continued but with mixed results. The Cuban people did secure some social gains, such as free medical services for all citizens. With improvements in education, illiteracy was nearly eliminated.

Haiti

After American troops left Haiti in 1934, the Haitians made several efforts to move toward democracy. In 1957, however, in elections controlled by the military, François Duvalier became president. He created a private militia, established dictatorial rule, and terrorized the country, killing tens of thousands. After his death in 1971, his son continued to rule Haiti with an

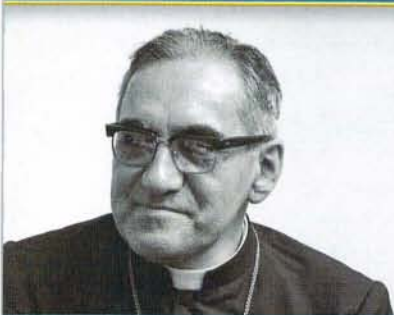
privatization the sale of government-owned companies to private firms



▲ Fidel Castro and two guerillas at their mountain hideout during the insurgency against Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista.

trade embargo a policy prohibiting trade with a particular country

BIOGRAPHY



Oscar Romero (1917–1980)

Oscar Romero was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador in part because of his moderate political views. But in his weekly radio broadcasts, he soon began to attack the Salvadoran government's violent practices. Romero quickly became, in the words of his personal aide, "the most loved person and the most hated person" in the country. On March 24, 1980, Romero was murdered while he celebrated mass in a private chapel in San Salvador. His death was the most notable in a 12-year-long civil war in which more than 70,000 Salvadorans died.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Specifying How did Oscar Romero's political views change?

target something or someone marked for attack

iron fist. Growing opposition to his rule led to the collapse of his regime in 1986, followed five years later by a return to democracy with the election of Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

Determining Cause and Effect What immediate effects did the Cuban revolution have on Cuba's relationship with the United States?

Central America

GUIDING QUESTION What economic and political challenges did Latin American countries face during the Cold War?

Central America includes seven countries: Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Panama, Belize, and Guatemala. Economically, Central America has historically depended on the export of bananas, coffee, and cotton. Prices for these products have varied over time, however, creating economic crises. In addition, a huge gulf between a wealthy elite and poor peasants has created a climate of instability in the region. The U.S. fear of the spread of communism often led to U.S. support for repressive regimes in Central America. The involvement of the United States was especially evident in the nations of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua.

Guatemala

In 1954, with support from the United States, Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala was overthrown. A series of military or military-dominated dictators then ruled the country for years. Guerrilla forces began forming to oppose the government, which responded in the early 1980s by using military action and economic reforms to defeat the guerrillas. As in El Salvador, right-wing death squads began attacking anyone they believed belonged to the opposition, especially the indigenous people of Guatemala, the descendants of the ancient Maya. The government killed as many as 200,000 people, mostly unarmed Maya.

El Salvador

After World War II, the wealthy elite and the military controlled the government in El Salvador. The rise of an urban middle class led to hope for a more democratic government. The army, however, refused to accept the results of free elections that were held in 1972.

World attention focused on El Salvador in the late 1970s and the 1980s when the country was rocked by a bitter civil war. Marxist-led, leftist guerrillas and right-wing groups battled one another. The Catholic Church became a main **target**, and a number of priests were killed or tortured, among them Archbishop Oscar Romero. The United States began to provide weapons and training to the Salvadoran army to defeat the guerrillas. The hope was to bring stability to the country, but the killings continued until a 1992 peace settlement ended the war.

Nicaragua

In Nicaragua, the Somoza family seized control of the government in 1937 and maintained control for the next 43 years. Over most of this period, the Somoza regime had the support of the United States. The Somozas enriched themselves at the expense of the Nicaraguan people and used murder and torture to silence opposition.

By 1979, the United States, under President Jimmy Carter, had grown unwilling to support the corrupt regime. In that same year, Marxist guerrilla forces known as the Sandinista National Liberation Front won a number of

military victories against government forces and gained control of the country. Soon, a group opposed to the Sandinistas' policies, called the *contras*, began to try to overthrow the new government. Worried by the Sandinistas' alignment with the Soviet Union, the United States supported the *contras*.

The war waged by the *contras* undermined support for the Sandinistas. In 1990 the Sandinistas, led by Daniel Ortega, agreed to free elections and lost to a coalition headed by Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, who became Nicaragua's first female president.



▲ This Nicaraguan mural depicts the killing of four students at an anti-Somoza protest on July 23, 1959.

✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

Comparing What experiences did Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have in common in the post-World War II period?

South America

GUIDING QUESTION What economic and political challenges did Latin American countries face during the Cold War?

Throughout the twentieth century, most South American countries experienced political unrest and had economic and social problems.

Chile

The history of Chile has mirrored the experience of other Latin American countries. However, it took a dramatic step in 1970 when Salvador Allende (ah • YEHN • day), a Marxist, became president. Allende's election led many to believe it would result in warm relations between Chile and the Soviet Union. This failed to happen. However, relations with the Soviet Union's Cold War opponent, the United States, turned cold.

Allende tried to create a socialist society through constitutional means. His first steps were to increase wages and to nationalize the largest corporations. Nationalization of the copper industry angered the companies' owners in the United States, as well as the U.S. government. However, Allende gained support in the Chilean congress. Afraid of Allende's growing strength, General Augusto Pinochet (PEE • noh • CHEHT) moved to overthrow the government. In September 1973 military forces killed Allende and set up a dictatorship.

The Pinochet regime was one of the most brutal in Chile's history. Thousands of opponents were imprisoned, tortured, or murdered. The regime also outlawed all political parties and did away with the congress. These horrible abuses of human rights led to growing unrest in the mid-1980s. Thousands of Pinochet opponents and other civilians were arrested and were never seen again. Pinochet finally lost in 1989 in free presidential elections.

Argentina

Argentina is Latin America's second-largest country. For years, it had been ruled by a powerful oligarchy whose wealth was based on growing wheat and raising cattle. Support from the army was crucial to the continuing power of the oligarchy.



▲ The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, mothers and grandmothers of the *desaparecidos* (the disappeared) of Argentina's "dirty war," demonstrate outside La Casa Rosada in Buenos Aires.

In 1943, during World War II, a group of army officers overthrew the oligarchy. The new regime was not sure how to deal with the working classes. Juan Perón devised a new strategy. Using his position as labor secretary in the military government, Perón sought to win over the workers, known as the *descamisados* (the shirtless ones). He encouraged them to join labor unions and increased job benefits.

In 1946 Juan Perón was elected president of Argentina, with his chief support coming from labor and the urban middle class. His wife, Eva Perón, was adored by many Argentines and was a major part of the Perón regime. Together, the Peróns brought social reforms to Argentina.

To please his supporters from labor and the urban middle class, Perón followed a policy of increased industrialization. He sought to free Argentina from foreign investors. The government bought the railways and took over the banking, insurance, shipping, and communications industries. Perón's regime, however, was also authoritarian. He created Fascist gangs that used violent means to terrify his opponents.

The military overthrew the Argentinean leader in September 1955. Perón went into exile in Spain. Overwhelmed by problems, military leaders later allowed him to return. He was reelected as president in 1973 but died a year later. In 1976 the military once again took over power. The new regime tolerated no opposition. It is believed that 36,000 people were killed.

In April 1982, the military regime invaded the Falkland Islands off the coast of Argentina. Great Britain, which had controlled the islands since the 1800s, sent ships and troops and took the islands back. The loss discredited the military and opened the door to civilian rule in Argentina. When Raúl Alfonsín was elected president in 1983, he restored democracy and prosecuted the former military leaders.

Colombia

Colombia has long had a democratic political system, but a conservative elite led by the owners of coffee plantations has dominated the government. Coffee is an important crop for Colombia, making up about half of the country's legal exports. Yet because the economy relies heavily upon the coffee trade, price fluctuations in either direction can have a negative effect on the overall economy.

In addition to economic problems, political problems troubled Colombia in the twentieth century. After World War II, Marxist guerrilla groups began to organize Colombian peasants. The government responded violently. More than 200,000 peasants had been killed by the mid-1960s. Violence continued in the 1980s and 1990s.

Peasants who lived in poverty turned to a new cash crop—coca leaves, which are used to make cocaine. As the lucrative drug trade grew, two major **cartels** formed in Colombia.

The drug cartels used bribes and violence to force government cooperation in the drug traffic and to dominate the market. Colombia became the major cocaine supplier of the international drug market. Violence increased as rebel guerrillas made deals with the cartels to oppose the government. The government used an aerial eradication program to try to wipe out cocaine fields, but the program did not have much success. Despite the money earned from drug and coffee exports, the Colombian economy remained weak because of high unemployment and the disruption of civil war.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Explaining How did the invasion of the Falkland Islands affect Argentina?

cartels groups of drug businesses

Latin American Society and Culture

GUIDING QUESTION *How did Latin American society and culture change after World War II?*

Latin America's economic problems have been made worse by its dramatic growth in population. Both Latin America and North America (the United States and Canada) had the same populations in 1950—about 165 million people. By the mid-1980s, however, Latin America's population had exploded to 400 million. That of North America was about 270 million. With the increase in population came a rapid rise in the size of cities. By 1990, there were 29 cities with more than a million people, including Mexico City and Buenos Aires. Analysts refer to such cities as megacities. **Megacities** in Latin America have often grown so fast that regular urban services cannot be provided.

megacity a very large city

Latin American women's roles have changed. Although the traditional role of homemaker continues, women have also moved into new jobs. In addition to farm labor, women have found jobs in industry and as teachers, professors, doctors, and lawyers.

Twentieth-century Latin American writers and artists have played important roles in their society. Their work is seen as expressing the hopes of the people. Because of this, artists and writers hold high status in Latin American society.

In the 1940s, Latin American writers developed a unique form of expression called magic realism. **Magic realism** brings together realistic events with dreamlike or fantasy backgrounds. The rules of ordinary life are suspended in order to comment on a national or social situation. Perhaps the foremost example of magic realism is *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, a novel by Gabriel García Márquez, a Colombian writer, who won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1982. In this story of the fictional town of Macondo, the point of view slips back and forth between fact and fantasy. According to Márquez, fantasy and fact depend on one's point of view.

magic realism a form of expression unique to Latin American literature; it combines realistic events with dreamlike or fantasy backgrounds

Latin American art and architecture were strongly influenced by international styles after World War II. Perhaps the most notable example of modern architecture can be seen in Brasília, the capital of Brazil, which was built in the 1950s and 1960s. Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer was appointed chief architect for the new capital.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Defining What problems do megacities cause in Latin America?

LESSON 4 REVIEW

Reviewing Vocabulary

- 1. Analyzing** How did the drug cartels in Colombia maintain their control over the cocaine trade?

Using Your Notes

- 2. Comparing** Use your notes to describe the similarities among major events in Latin American countries during the Cold War.

Answering the Guiding Questions

- 3. Identifying Central Issues** How did the involvement of the United States and the Soviet Union increase instability in Latin American countries?

- 4. Making Generalizations** What economic and political challenges did Latin American countries face during the Cold War?

- 5. Identifying** How did Latin American society and culture change after World War II?

Writing Activity

- 6. Argument** The United States has increasingly tried to use economic tools rather than military force to resolve conflicts in Latin America. Research the trade embargo imposed on Cuba. Write a persuasive argument for or against the embargo.