

LESSON 4

Latin America

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What motivates political change?
- How can economic and social changes affect a country?

READING HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

- considerable
- fund

Content Vocabulary

- **normalization**
- **remittance**

TAKING NOTES

Key Ideas and Details

Identifying As you read, use a table like the one below to identify key political leaders and economic and social issues in Latin American countries.

Country	Political Leaders	Economic and Social Issues

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

For much of Latin America's history, Latin Americans have struggled to free themselves from oppressive rule, civil war, poverty, and economic dependence on foreign countries. Today, most countries in the region have created democratic governments and many have reformed their social and economic structures, but problems of income inequality and political violence remain.

Mexico

GUIDING QUESTION *In what ways did Mexican politics and society change in the 1990s and 2000s?*

Mexico responded to the Cold War differently than many other countries in Latin America that experienced geopolitical influence from the United States and the Soviet Union or internal political revolutions. Mexico had a stable, one-party political system that limited internal opposition. It was not until the Cold War ended that Mexicans' fatigue with one-party rule became evident and opposition parties gained influence.

End of PRI Dominance

The Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, dominated Mexican politics for 71 years, from its founding in 1929 until 2000. Every single president and most of the important national and local legislators were members of the PRI. Support for the PRI dropped in the 1990s as the continuing debt crisis, rising unemployment, and corruption scandals increased dissatisfaction with the government.

In 2000 Vicente Fox of the National Action Party, or PAN, unexpectedly defeated Ernesto Zedillo, the PRI candidate for the presidency. The PAN is a center-right political party that had been formed much earlier. A true multiparty system began to emerge in Mexico. Fox's successor, Felipe Calderón, was elected in 2006 and served through 2012. At the same time, the Democratic Revolutionary Party, or PRD, emerged as a weaker third party challenger to both the PRI and PAN.

The PRI returned to power in 2012 when Enrique Peña Nieto was elected president for a 6-year term in office. PRD candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador contested the election results with charges of corruption and vote buying by the PRI. Even with the return of the PRI, Mexican politics had changed in the 12-year period of its absence from the presidency. Mexico now has a multiparty system with three viable political parties—the PRI, PAN, and PRD.

Drug War

The emergence of a multiparty political system has not solved all of Mexico's problems. High poverty rates, illiteracy, high unemployment, and political corruption have helped fuel the drug trade that has become a violent drug war. This drug war has increasingly challenged the country. When President Felipe Calderón came to office in 2006 he ordered a military response against the country's drug gangs. He hoped to find a way to slow and halt the drug trade and its devastating effects on the country. But the violence and killings only increased. Between 2007 and 2014, more than 164,000 people were killed in this drug war. 2011 saw the most violence with approximately 27,000 people killed. President Peña Nieto has continued a similar approach to Mexico's drug war since coming to office in 2012. The violence has continued.

The drug trade is a problem not just for Mexico but for all of the Americas. Colombia is the world's biggest producer of cocaine. Mexico serves as the gateway into the United States, which is the largest market for the drug. Mexican drug cartels, or criminal organizations whose chief purpose is to promote and control drug trafficking operations, began to transport drugs for the Colombians. More recently, however, they have taken over the distribution of drugs in the United States. This has led to **considerable** violence on the border of Mexico and the United States.

considerable large in amount or quantity

GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

- 1 ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY** Explain the relationship between the drug trade and violence in the region.
- 2 THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS** Identify the cities on the map that are located near an international border. How does geography help explain the violence in these cities?



Mexican drug cartels recruit their members from a pool of soldiers who had served in the armies of several countries, including Guatemala and El Salvador. Increasingly, Mexican drug cartels also rely upon young people of Central America, who are poor and unemployed. These teenagers are willing to transport drugs, to watch kidnap victims, and to perform other low-level tasks.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Describing How do Mexican drug cartels traffic in drugs?

The Caribbean and Central America

GUIDING QUESTION *How have social and political issues affected Caribbean and Central American countries since the end of the Cold War?*

Many countries in Central America and the Caribbean are poverty stricken. Some countries in the region have high levels of violence. Others remain extremely poor but have less violence. These challenges have led large numbers of people to emigrate from Central America to Mexico and the United States. Meanwhile relations between Cuba and the United States are changing.

Cuba

When the Soviet Union fell in 1989, it was a crushing blow to the Cuban economy which relied on Soviet aid and the sale of Cuban sugar to Soviet bloc countries. Cuba struggled to find new sources of revenue. Yet the government remained fairly stable. Fidel Castro remained in power until poor health forced him to step down in 2008. His brother, Raúl Castro, then became president of Cuba.

Tense relations between Cuba and the United States began to improve at the end of 2014 when Raul Castro and U.S. president Obama announced that they would begin restoring diplomatic ties that were severed in 1961. Progress was made in this process of **normalization** throughout 2015. Cuba was removed from the U.S. State Department's list of states that sponsor terrorism in May 2015. Two months later, the United States and Cuba reopened their embassies in Havana and Washington, D.C. Perhaps the last hurdle is the United States' continuing trade embargo with Cuba. Because it requires U.S. congressional approval, it will be much more difficult to end.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic

The countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic share the small island of Hispaniola in the Caribbean but are very different countries. Haiti remains an extremely resource poor nation—one of the poorest in the world. The country is still recovering from the devastating effects of the 2010 earthquake that killed more than 230,000 people and injured more than 300,000 people.

The Dominican Republic has fared better than its western neighbor. The economy of the Dominican Republic relies on tourism and **remittances** from Dominicans abroad. Since the 1990s, democracy has increased in the Dominican Republic.

A recent controversy between Haiti and the Dominican Republic stems from the implementation of an immigration law by the Dominican government. In 2015 the government began deporting Haitians who were unable to prove their Dominican citizenship.

El Salvador

Beginning in 1989, conservatives ruled El Salvador. In 2004 President Antonio Saca became El Salvador's fourth consecutive president from the National Republican Alliance (ARENA) party.

normalization to bring something back to a normal condition

remittances money sent



▲ Haiti was devastated by the 2010 earthquake. Many structures became uninhabitable and thousands became homeless.

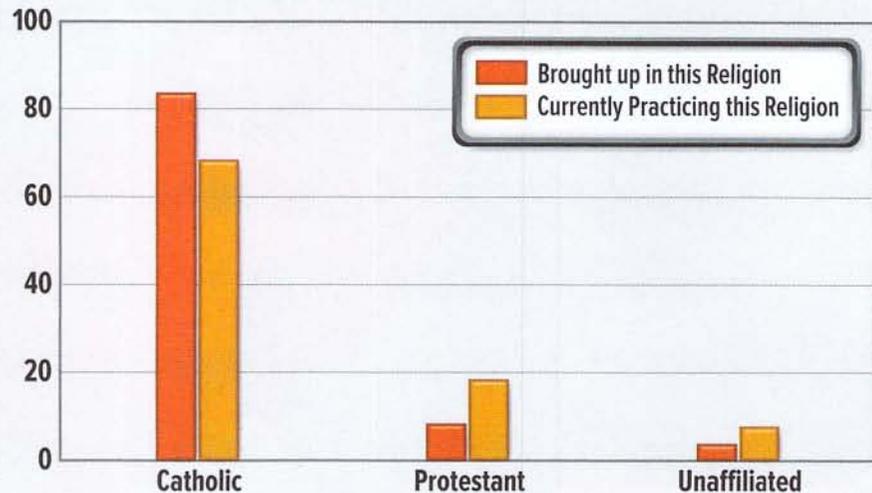
► **CRITICAL THINKING**

Explaining Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Explain how this affects its recovery from natural disasters such as the 2010 earthquake.

While Catholicism is the predominant religion in Latin America, Protestantism has increased dramatically in recent decades.

► **CRITICAL THINKING**

- 1 Transferring Information**
Use the information in the bar graph to create a circle graph of religion in Latin America today. You may use rounded numbers.
- 2 Analyzing** Explain a trend of religion in Latin America that is evident from the bar graph.



This conservative streak ended in 2009 when the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) candidate, television journalist Mauricio Funes became president. He was the first president to acknowledge the crimes committed during El Salvador's bloody civil war, including the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero. In 2012 El Salvador's high murder rate began to decline following a truce between rival gangs, only to increase again as the truce fell apart. In 2014 Funes's vice president, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, a former schoolteacher and left-wing guerrilla commander during the civil war, became president. Gang violence and poverty continue to challenge the country.

Honduras

After the human rights abuses committed by the armed forces during the 1980s, Honduras began the process of demilitarizing in the 1990s. In 1993 Liberal Party candidate Carlos Reina was elected president and pledged to begin the process of limiting the power of the police forces and armed forces to prevent future abuses. The country was devastated by Hurricane Mitch in 1998. It was a huge economic setback and only increased income inequality and poverty in Honduras. In response, large numbers of migrants left the country.

In 2005 Manuel Zelaya of the Liberal Party became president. In June 2009, Zelaya sought to change the constitution to allow him to serve a second term. The Honduran military forcibly removed him from office in a coup and forced him to go into exile. There was international condemnation of the coup and many countries temporarily suspended diplomatic ties with Honduras. Porfirio Lobo Sosa of the National Party won the presidential election later that year.

Violence from gangs and police forces continued to be a problem in the 2000s. More than 1,500 homeless children who lived on the streets were murdered—some allegedly with the participation of the police or security forces. Fighting between rival street gangs, including Mara Salvatrucha and the 18th Street gang, has led to escalating violence within the country. Kidnappings for ransom are also frequent. President Juan Orlando Hernández—a conservative—began office in 2014. At the time, Honduras had the highest murder rate in the world.

✓ **READING PROGRESS CHECK**

Explaining How has political violence affected El Salvador and Honduras?



South America: GDP Per Capita 2014



GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

1 PLACES AND REGIONS

Which countries in South America have a GDP per capita of more than \$16,000? What do these countries have in common?

2 PLACES AND REGIONS

Which countries in South America have the lowest GDP per capita? Name a physical characteristic these countries have in common.

South America

GUIDING QUESTION How have economic issues affected South American countries since the end of the Cold War?

Programs for increased public education and greater economic growth have helped to alleviate one of South America's greatest challenges, income inequality, or the large gap between rich and poor.

At the end of the 1990s and first decade of the 2000s, a noticeable political trend has been the election of left-wing governments. Bolivia, Paraguay, and Peru elected populist leaders. Argentina's election of a conservative president in 2015 went against this trend. Most, but not all, of these countries have pushed for democratic freedoms, social reforms, and economic growth.

Peru

In 1990 Peruvians chose Alberto Fujimoro as president. Fujimoro, the son of Japanese immigrants, promised reforms. However, he later suspended the constitution and congress, became a dictator, and began a campaign against the Shining Path guerrillas. Corruption led to Fujimoro's removal from power in 2000.

In June 2001, Alejandro Toledo became Peru's first freely elected president of indigenous descent. His successor, Alan García Pérez, sought to increase employment and decrease poverty to make Peru more economically stable.

Ollanta Humala became president of Peru in 2011. President Humala is a former military officer who led the military revolt against President Fujimoro in 2000 that saw Fujimoro's removal. Humala has taken a moderate stance in office. The Peruvian economy has experienced healthy GDP growth and low inflation.

fund give money for a specific purpose



Michelle Bachelet (1951–)

Michelle Bachelet was born into a political family. Her father was a member of President Salvador Allende's government and was imprisoned and tortured by the regime of Augusto Pinochet. He died in jail. In 1975 she was kidnapped and tortured and then went into exile. She later returned to Chile, completed her studies in medicine, and became a pediatrician. She became involved in government service after becoming active with the Socialist Party. Michelle Bachelet was the first woman to be elected president of Chile. From 2006–2010, Bachelet focused on improving the social and health conditions of Chileans. After a few years as head of UN Women, she returned as Chile's president in 2014.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Making Connections How do you think Bachelet's young adulthood affected her political involvement?

Argentina

A severe financial crisis shook Argentina in 2001–2002 that led the Argentine government to default on its debt obligations in 2002. President Néstor Kirchner, a Peronist, served as president from 2003 to 2007. His wife, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, was elected to two consecutive terms as president. Their politics became known as Kirchnerism—a leftist faction of Peronism.

The economy initially improved under President Kirchner. The government refused to pay creditors the full amount owed and worked with creditors in 2005 and again in 2010 to restructure a large portion of the debt it had defaulted on in 2002. But some U.S. creditors refused the debt restructuring plan, which forced Argentina back into default in 2014. At the same time, inflation began to rise.

In November 2015, in a run-off election, Argentine voters elected Mauricio Macri, the mayor of Buenos Aires and leader of the Republic Proposal, a center-right political party, as president. President Macri is viewed as more supportive of business than his predecessor.

Brazil

In 2002 Brazil elected Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, its first left-wing president in four decades. President Lula da Silva pursued a policy of increased trade and educational reform. He expanded the middle class and created new consumers while continuing to increase exports. Brazil successfully decreased its foreign debt and had record trade surpluses from 2003 to 2007.

His successor, Dilma Rousseff, was elected in 2010 and became the first woman president of Brazil. As President Rousseff began her second term in office, the Brazilian economy went into recession. Political scandals in Rousseff's administration led to her impeachment in 2016. Michel Temer replaced her.

Chile

Chile has seen unprecedented economic growth and a low rate of inflation. Chile has signed trade agreements with more than 57 entities, including the United States, China, and the European Union.

President Michelle Bachelet was Chile's first female president. During her first term in office from 2006–2010, she used revenue from copper resources to **fund** social programs for women and children. In her second term, she continued to focus on policies designed to decrease income inequality.

✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

Naming Which South American countries had a female president during the 2000s?

LESSON 4 REVIEW

Reviewing Vocabulary

- Explaining** Why are remittances so important to the economy of the Dominican Republic?

Using Your Notes

- Comparing and Contrasting** Use your notes to compare and contrast economic and social issues in different Latin American countries since the end of the Cold War.

Answering the Guiding Questions

- Describing** In what ways did Mexican politics and society change in the 1990s and 2000s?

- Explaining** How have social and political issues affected Caribbean and Central American countries since the end of the Cold War?

- Explaining** How have economic issues affected South American countries since the end of the Cold War?

Writing Activity

- Informative/Explanatory** Select one of the Latin American countries discussed in this lesson. Conduct outside research about the current political and economic situation in the country you chose. Write a one-page fact sheet describing the current political administration, the level of democracy in the country, and the state of the economy.