

Did the success of "strongmen" in the liberation of Latin American countries limit democracy in this region in subsequent years?

Latin America in the 19th Century:

- Independence
- Political Development
- United States Imperialism
- Immigration

Caudillos, Politics, and the Church.

- The new nations suffered from the warfare ending in independence.
 - Armies loyal to their leaders led to the rise of *caudillos*, men who controlled local areas.
 - They intervened in national politics to make and unmake governments.
 - At times the caudillos defended the interests of regional elites, or of Indians and peasants. In general they disregarded representative forms and the rule of law.
- There were many differences among leaders about the forms of republican government.
 - Centralists wanted strong governments with broad powers while federalists favored awarding authority to regional governments.
 - Liberals, influenced by the French and United States models, stressed individual rights, opposed the corporate structure of colonial society, and favored a federalist government.
 - Conservatives wanted a centralized state and wished to maintain a society where corporate groups ruled social action.
- The role of the church became a critical political. Liberals sought to limit its civil role, but met strong opposition from conservatives and the Papacy.
- The political parties that formed were led by landowners and the urban middle class; they argued about liberal or conservative ideas, but shared basic class loyalties. The rest of the population was not concerned with political ideology.
- The result was enduring political instability, with rapid turnovers of rulers and constitutions. Only a few nations had general stability: Chile after reforms of its system in 1833 and the Brazilian monarchy. For most of Latin America the basic questions of government and society remained unresolved.

- Liberal reformers during the 1820s and 1830s attempted to break colonial patterns and follow European trends. Latin American societies were not ready for many of the reforms; the conservative weight of the church, landowners, and army remained potent. They returned to power by the 1840s and halted or hindered reform. An alliance between them and peasantry emerged to oppose change.

- Liberals returned to power during the last quarter of the 19th century. They based their policies on the positivism of Auguste Comte, stressing a scientific approach to social problems. The shift was caused by changes in the nature of the Industrial Revolution and the age of imperialism. *The new political leaders were inspired by the example of Western Europe and the United States, but their distrust of their mass populations prevented the success of many efforts.*

Mexico: Instability and Foreign Intervention.

- The 1824 Mexican constitution was a federalist document that established a republic and guaranteed basic civil rights; but it did not address the serious issues of inequitable distribution of land, the status of Indians, the problems of education, or the poverty of most of the population.
- Conservative centralists opposed liberal federalists; foreign commercial agents added additional complications. Liberals during the early 1830s tried sweeping reforms, but they fell before a conservative reaction led by Antonio López de Santa Ana. He was a typical caudillo and the defects of the regime drew foreign intervention by Spain and France.
- War with the United States ended in Mexican defeat and the loss of about one-half of its territory. The war left a bitter distrust of the United States and caused a serious loss of Mexican economic potential.
- Politicians were stimulated to confront their nation's internal problems which had contributed to defeat. Indian lawyer Benito Juárez led a liberal revolt in 1854 and inaugurated a new constitution in 1857. Military and church privileges were curtailed and church and Indian communal lands were sold to individuals. Speculators, however, bought the land and left peasants and Indians poorer than previously.
- Conservative reaction led to civil war and the summoning of French assistance. The French placed Maximilian von Habsburg on the throne, but Juárez refused to accept the foreign ruler. When the French withdrew in 1867 Maximilian was captured and executed. Juárez regained office to lead an autocratic regime until his death in 1872. By 1880 Mexico was about to enter a period of strong central government and political stability.

The Brazilian Empire.

- Many problems were present behind Brazil's facade of 19th-century political stability. Internal disputes between liberals and conservatives were complicated by arguments for and against the monarchy. Provinces opposed centralized rule and many unsuccessful regional revolts ensued.
- The development of coffee as an export crop brought economic resurgence. Prosperity continued after 1850 along with political tranquillity. The communication and transport systems improved; foreign investment increased. New political currents included the growth of urban and middle class groups less tied to landholding and slavery, and the arrival of thousands of European immigrants who reduced dependence on slaves. The abolitionist movement gained strength, and slaves increased their resistance to their status. Slavery was abolished in 1888.
- Support for the monarchy waned. A long war against Paraguay brought the military into politics, and state quarrels with the church drew them into the opposition. Planters turned away from slavery to positivist ideas. The Republican Party, formed in 1871, won wide support and a coup replaced the monarchy by a republic in 1889. Social and political problems caused by modernization remained unresolved.

Uncle Sam Goes South.

- American political and economic interest in Latin America grew after the Civil War. The Spanish-American War of 1898 brought the United States directly into Latin American affairs. American investment in Cuba predated the war, and following it the door was open for direct involvement in the Caribbean. Cuba became an American economic dependent and Puerto Rico was annexed.
- When Colombia was reluctant to meet American proposals for building the Panama Canal, the United States backed a revolution in Panama and gained exclusive rights over the canal. Latin Americans as a consequence became very suspicious of the expansionist United States.