

The Latin American Left

Current Events Wednesday
February 21, 2018



The Latin American Left, 2007



The Latin American Left

- The roots of the Latin American left:
 - Anti-Americanism.
 - Populism.
 - Marxist influences.




The Latin American Left

- Anti-American roots of the Latin American left.




The Monroe Doctrine, 1823
European powers:
Stay out of Western hemisphere.




The "Banana Wars" 1898–1934

- 1898: end of Spanish-American War.
 - The US got Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.
- Multiple invasions and interventions by US throughout Latin America.

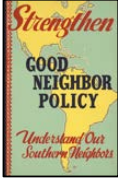



US soldiers fighting in Haiti, 1915




The 1934 Reversal: The "Good Neighbor Policy"

- "No country has the right to intervene in the internal or external affairs of another."
- Non-interventionism, reciprocity.



1945-1991: Cold War

- Latin America was a battleground in the proxy wars.
- Mostly US-supported governments vs Soviet-supported guerilla movements.



Cold War-Era US Interventions

- 1954: CIA-assisted coup in Guatemala.
- 1959: supported creation of *Tonton Macoute* by Haitian dictator.
 - Decades of massive HR violations.



Haitian Tonton Macoute soldier



Cold War-Era US Interventions

- 1961: assisted Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba.
- 1963: supported assassination of Dominican president.




Cold War-Era US Interventions

- 1964: assisted military coup in Brazil.
- 1965: invaded Dominican Republic.
- 1969: US advisors taught torture techniques to Uruguayan police.





Cold War-Era US Interventions

- 1971: assisted military coup in Bolivia.
- 1973: CIA-assisted coup in Chile.




Chilean President Salvador Allende, killed in coup in 1973.




Cold War-Era US Interventions

- 1976: supported military coup in Argentina.
- 1980s: supported government that organized death squads in El Salvador.
- 1989: invaded Panama to remove president in dispute over Panama Canal.





Salvadoran death squad.



US Army School of the Americas (Georgia)

- Military training for LA allies.
- 1961+: emphasis on fighting communism.
- Training in torture techniques.

Close the School of Murderers!
Never more!
Enough!

Economic Relations: A Mixed Bag

- The US is the top trading partner of most LA states.
- Numerous bilateral trade agreements.
- Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (under negotiation).
- Claims of "dependency."





Democratization Wave: The People Take Control

- 1979: Ecuador
- 1980: Peru
- 1983: Argentina
- 1984: Nicaragua
- 1985: Uruguay
- 1985: Brazil
- 1989: Paraguay
- 1989: Chile
- 1992: El Salvador
- 2000: Peru (again)




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Populism

- **** Populism:** a political strategy that appeals to the interests of the common person.
- Anti-elite.
- Often appeals to people's grievances, fear, and anger.







Latin American Populism

- Centered around the tradition of the ****caudillo**, a strongman who fights for and unites "the people."
 - A "people's champion."
 - Often charismatic.

Venezuela's late President
Hugo Chavez (d. 2013)


Leftist Populism

- Promises of ****redistributive policies** based on Marxist influences.
 - Redistribution of *political* power from elites to the masses.
 - Redistribution of *economic* power.
 - Land reform.
 - Education and social policies.
 - High taxes on businesses.



Example: Hugo Chavez



- Venezuelan president 2002–2013.
 - Redistributed 5m acres of land.
 - Increased health care access.
 - Food and housing subsidies.

Example: Evo Morales


- Bolivian president 2006–present.
 - Raised taxes on natural gas industry from 18% to 82%.
 - Electricity, clean water, roads, schools.
 - Decreased income inequality, reduced poverty.
 - Indigenous rights.*

* 44% of the population.

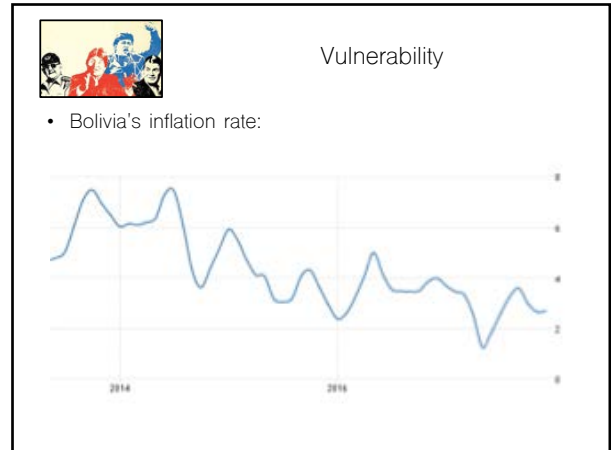
What do they have in common?

- Anti-Americanism:
 - Interventionist history.
 - Trade and investment policies that are perceived to benefit US and corporations.
- Caudillo* persona.
- Hydrocarbon fuel exports that pay for populist policies.
 - Venezuela: oil.
 - Bolivia: natural gas.



Vulnerability

- Populist policies are expensive.
- Dependence on oil/gas prices.
 - Huge drop in 2015.
 - Fewer oil imports to US.
- Domestic economic elites often don't cooperate.



Conclusion

- Latin American leftism is endemic.
 - And usually populist.
- But electoral cycles matter.
 - In functional democracies (most of the continent).

A Word About the Assigned Video

- From 2006, beginning of the leftist wave.
- Republican presidency.
- The speaker: a career diplomat.
- What are the roots of her optimism?

Elizabeth Whitaker
Department of State