

Latin America
The Shark and the Sardines*

Question: Did U.S. government or military involvement for Cold War reasons in the internal affairs of Latin American countries have a beneficial impact?

Hypothesis: U.S. government and military involvement for Cold War reasons in the internal affairs of Latin American countries tended to aggravate already existing problems in those countries.

I. Countries Where No Substantial U.S. or Soviet Government or Military Involvement Either Overt or Covert Occurred: Three Case Studies

A. Brazil

1. Getúlio Vargas (1883–1954), President 1930–1945, 1950–1954
2. Juscelino Kubitschek, President 1955–1961
 - a. “Fifty years’ progress in five”
 - b. Brasília
3. João Goulart, President 1961–1964
4. Military rule (1965–1985)

B. Argentina

1. Juan Perón (1895–1974), President 1946–1955, 1973–1974
2. Eva Duarte de Perón (1919–1952)
3. Military rule (1976–1983)
 - a. “Dirty” War
 - b. Malvinas/Falkland War (1982)
 - c. Triple- and quadruple-digit inflation
4. Carlos Menem (1930–), President 1989–1999

C. Mexico

1. One-Party rule (1929–2000)
 - a. Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) est. 1929
 - b. renamed Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in 1946
2. José López Portillo (1920–), President 1976–1982
3. Drop in oil prices (1986)
4. U.S. acted to prevent collapse of private banks (1995)

* Juan Arévalo, President of Guatemala (1945–1950) described U.S.-Latin American relations as “the shark and the sardines”

II. Countries Where Substantial U.S. Government or Military Involvement Either Overt or Covert Did Occur between 1951 and 1991: Case Studies

A. Guatemala

B. Dominican Republic

1. Military rule (1930–1961)
2. U.S. military intervention against Leftist rebellion (1965)

C. Chile

D. El Salvador

1. Military rule (1931–1979)
 - a. “football war” with Honduras 1969
2. Civil war 1980–1992
 - a. José Napoleón Duarte, President 1984–1989
 - b. Alfredo Cristiani (1947–), President 1989–1994
3. Death Squads

E. Nicaragua

1. Somoza Era (1936–1979)
2. Daniel Ortega (1945–), President 1985–1990
 - a. in 1963, joined the Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN)
 - b. fought against the Contras
3. Violeta Chamorro, President 1990–1996
 - a. wife of Pedro Chamorro, newspaper publisher, who was assassinated in 1978

F. British Guiana/Guyana (independence gained 1966)

1. Cheddi Jagan (1918–1997)
 - a. member of the People’s Progressive Party (PPP)
 - b. Chief Minister for 133 days in 1953
 - c. Premier 1961–1964
 - d. President 1992–1997
2. Janet Jagan (1920–), President 1997–2001

G. Grenada

1. Maurice Bishop (1944–1983), Prime Minister 1979–1983
2. U.S. Military Invasion (October 25, 1983)

H. Panama

1. Canal Treaty 1977
2. Manuel Noriega “maximum leader” 1989
3. U.S. Invasion, December 1989

Conclusion: Mixed results