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An aerial photograph of a dense, vibrant green forest. A river winds through the landscape, with a small waterfall visible. A vertical strip of crumpled orange paper runs down the center of the image, partially overlapping the text.

A JOURNEY THROUGH LATIN AMERICA'S OPEN VEINS

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Introduction

*“Along the way we have even lost the right to call ourselves Americans [...]. For the world today, America is just the United States: the region we inhabit is a sub-America, a second-class America of nebulous identities. **Latin America is the region of open veins”.***

*“Por el camino hasta perdimos el derecho de llamarnos americanos [...]. Ahora América es, para el mundo, nada más que los Estados Unidos: nosotros habitamos, a lo sumo, una sub América, una América de segunda clase, de nebulosa identificación. **Es América Latina, la región de las venas abiertas”.***

*Eduardo Galeano,
Open Veins of Latin America.*

Throughout history, the Latin American region has been conquered, abused, and violated. To this day, the rhetoric of Latin America as a menial at the service of others still permeates foreign policies and political agendas (Galeano, 11). The exploitation of the region's people as well as resources has evolved through the decades but never came to a halt. Slowly and incessantly, the region's veins have been cut open so that the oppressors could draw as much as they needed: from the right to be called Americans, to soil, fruits, and natural resources (Galeano, 12).

This portfolio explores the many ways in which Latin America has bled and continues to bleed. The collection of pieces that follows does not revolve around a single political, economic, or social aspect of the Latin American exploitation. Rather, it is a journey through various facets of the region's struggles.

The first piece, #NiUnaMenos: A Visual Journey, is an attempt to give a voice to the victims of systemic machismo and gender violence. Through a combination of stories as well as visuals, the piece hopes to narrate the emergence and development of Argentina's feminist movement. In this particular work, I use Galeano's metaphor of “open veins” to talk how much women's blood has been and keeps being spilled in Latin America (and the world at large). I join my sisters in their call for Ni Una Menos: Vivas Nos Queremos.

The second piece, United States: Arsenal Of Democracy or Dictatorship Lover?, uses the School of the America as a lens to assess the United States interventionism in Latin America. Challenging the rhetoric of the U.S. as the defender of democracy, I offer evidence of the country's widespread support to dictatorships throughout Latin America. In this piece, I explored the ways in which the U.S. is responsible for opening a lot of the region's veins in terms of political stability.

The third piece, Venezuela's Democratic Backsliding: From Chavez's Delegative Democracy to Maduro's Full-Blown Dictatorship, is an analysis of Venezuela's political landscape from the Chavez presidency to Maduro's regime. Using O'Donnell's political theory, I explore the democratic backslide that has caused Venezuela to revert to an authoritarian regime. Through Venezuela, I address the blood spill perpetuated by Latin America's violent regimes.

The fourth and last piece, Women's sterilization in Brazil: The Untold Story behind Structural Adjustment Programs, exposes the use of family planning to implement population control programs in Brazil. Debunking the myth that Latin America's overpopulation is the main cause for poverty, this piece provides evidence that family planning in Brazil was turned into a tool to target the poor rather than poverty. In this last piece, I touch upon a couple of aspects of Galeano's “open veins”: first, I speak of the violence against poor and uninformed Brazilian women. Second, I address the exploitation of Brazil's natural resources at the expense of the Brazilian population.

#NiUnaMenos: A Visual Journey



Early Beginnings: Susana Chavez

Susana Chavez was a Mexican poet. She grew up in Ciudad Juarez, a city I at the border between the US and Mexico. Living in Juarez, though, was tough. During the 90s, femicides spiked. All around Susana, women systemically raped and murdered. Just in Juarez, more than 300 women were murdered.

Susana used her poetry to denounce the violence. In 1995, she coined what years later would become the slogan of Argentina's feminist movement.

“Ni una muerta más, ni una menos” : “Not one more death, not one less woman”.

On January 6th of 2011, Susana became una muerta más, una mujer menos. Another woman killed for being a woman. The police investigating her case dismissed it as an “unfortunate encounter” and the three teenagers who murdered her were set free. Her voice, though, continues to live.

Ni Una m e n o s



#NiUnaMenos: A Visual Journey

Argentina's Cry: Chiara Páez

Chiara was a 14 year-old Argentine teenager. She was pregnant with a baby that she wanted to keep. When she told her boyfriend, he forced her to take medication to terminate her pregnancy and eventually beat her to death. Chiara's body was found in the garden of her boyfriend's grandparents.

This happens in 2015, five years after Susana Chavez's death. Despite Susana's call for "ni una menos", not much has changed from the 90s. 1 woman every 30 hours is still being killed in Latin America and, at this point, women are tired. They have seen their sisters, mothers, and friends be brutally violated. They want the violence to stop.

In Argentina, the grief for Chiara's murder becomes a catalyst, the force that brings Argentinian women together.





June 3rd of 2015.
The First March.

Thousands of women took the streets in Buenos Aires, rallying around the hashtag of #NiUnaMenos.

They demanded anti gender-violence legislation, an official femicide register, and public officials' training to reports of violence.



#NiUnaMenos: A Visual Journey



Violence Continues: Lucia Perez

The first march brought a wave of optimism. Women felt like their voices were finally heard. The optimism, however, did not last long.

Just a year after the first march, another woman was killed. Her name was Lucia Perez and she was an Argentine teenager who was kidnapped from school. She was drugged, gang-raped, and murdered.

At this point, women's frustration grew even deeper. They realized that simply raising their voices was not enough to get the government's attention.

The grief over Lucia's murderer led to transformation within the #NiUnaMenosMovement. In 2016, under the conservative Macri administration, women decide to send a new message: if we stop, your economy stops as well.



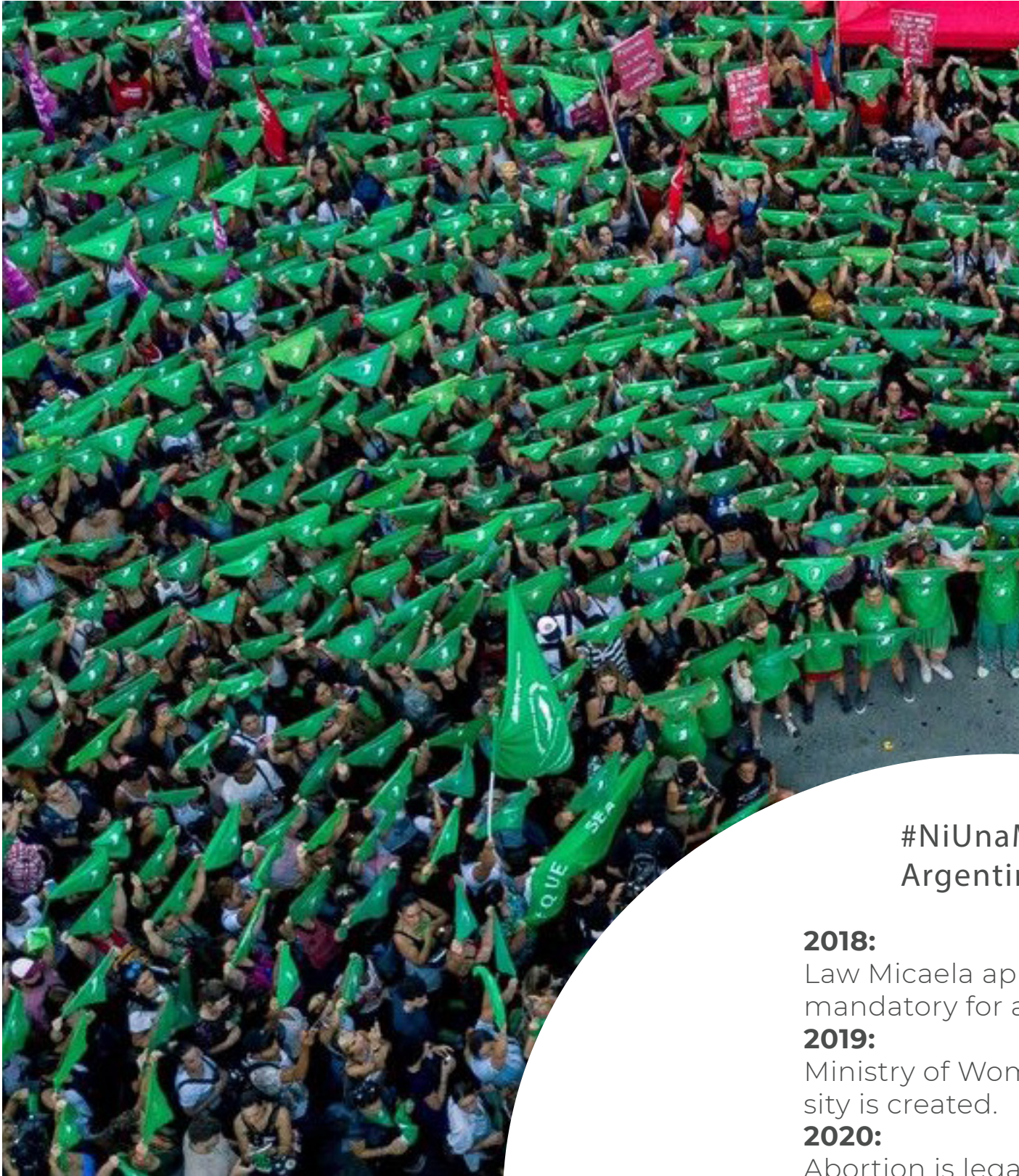
October 19th of 2016.

Paro Nacional de Mujeres.

Hoping to draw attention to their demands, women decided to suspend all their activities for a symbolic hour.

They framed their importance in terms of economic terms to get the government's attention.





#NiUnaMenos
Argentina

- 2018:** Law Micaela Apolonia is passed, making abortion mandatory for a doctor.
- 2019:** The Ministry of Women's Affairs is created.
- 2020:** Abortion is legal.



**Menos:
ne Successes**

proved: gender training
all state officials.

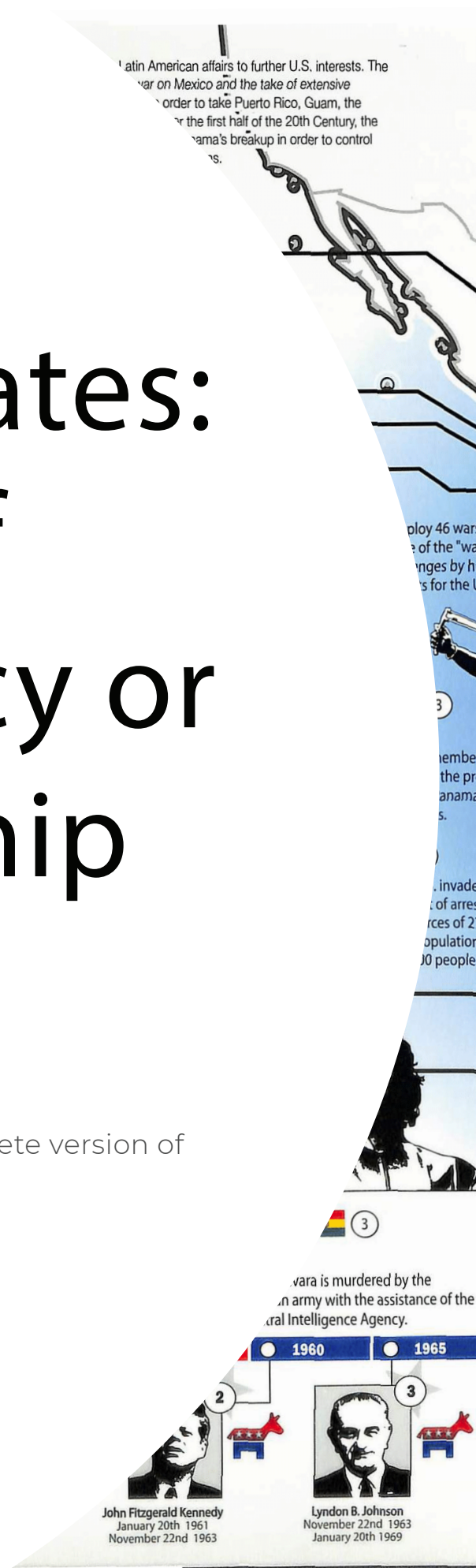
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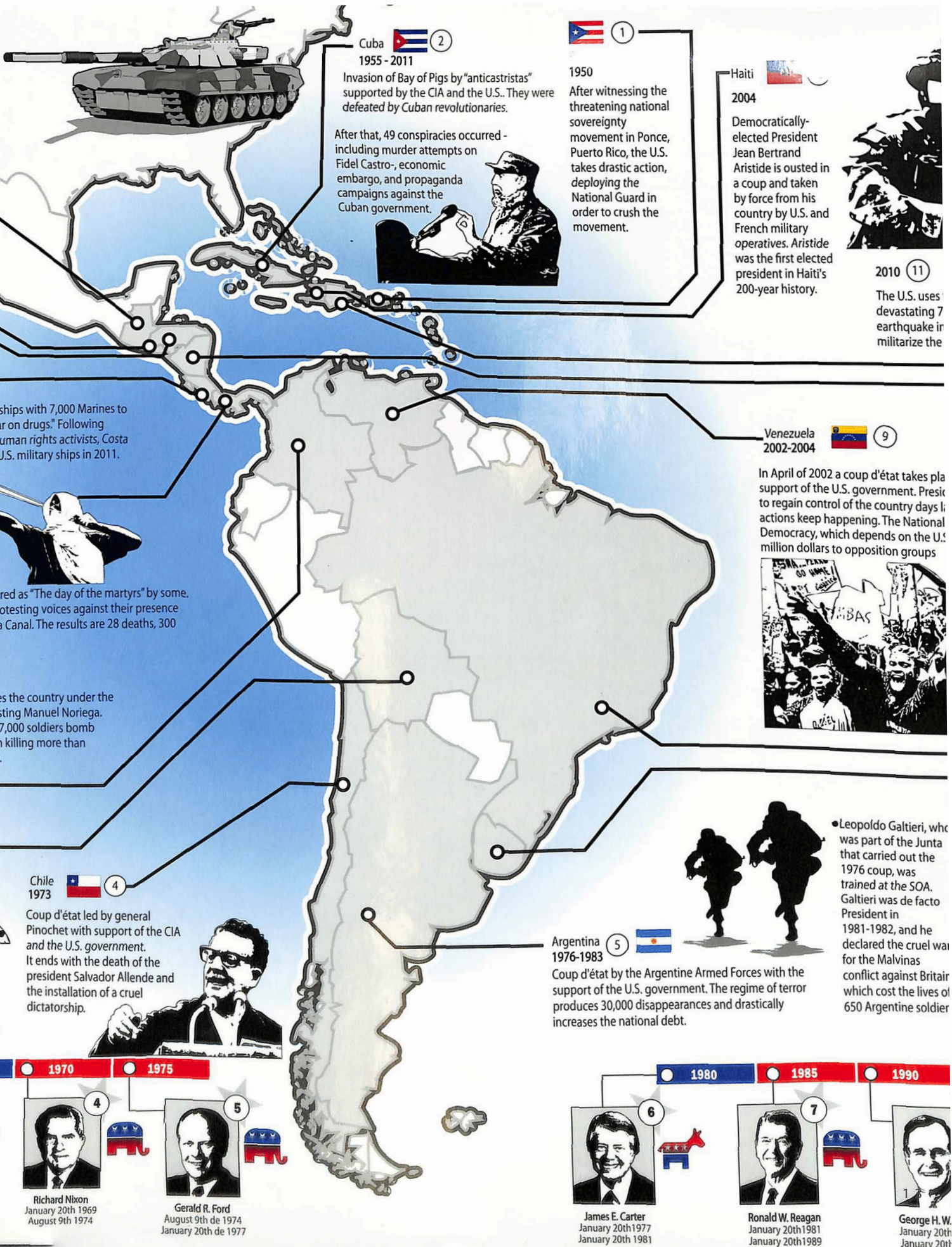
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United States: Arsenal of Democracy or Dictatorship Lover?

Please refer to Appendix 1 for a complete version of the map cited throughout the article.

SOA Watch. 2011. "Map of U.S. Intervention in Latin America."

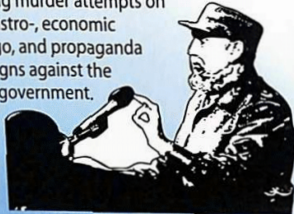




Cuba  ②
1955 - 2011

Invasion of Bay of Pigs by "anticastristas" supported by the CIA and the U.S. They were defeated by Cuban revolutionaries.

After that, 49 conspiracies occurred - including murder attempts on Fidel Castro-, economic embargo, and propaganda campaigns against the Cuban government.



 ①

1950
After witnessing the threatening national sovereignty movement in Ponce, Puerto Rico, the U.S. takes drastic action, deploying the National Guard in order to crush the movement.

Haiti  ⑩
2004

Democratically-elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide is ousted in a coup and taken by force from his country by U.S. and French military operatives. Aristide was the first elected president in Haiti's 200-year history.



2010 ⑪
The U.S. uses devastating 7 earthquake in militarize the

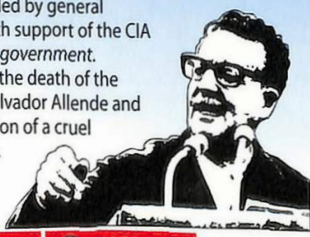
Venezuela  ⑨
2002-2004


In April of 2002 a coup d'état takes place with support of the U.S. government. President Hugo Chavez is ousted and actions keep happening. The National Assembly, which depends on the U.S. million dollars to opposition groups



Chile  ④
1973

Coup d'état led by general Pinochet with support of the CIA and the U.S. government. It ends with the death of the president Salvador Allende and the installation of a cruel dictatorship.



Argentina  ⑤
1976-1983

Coup d'état by the Argentine Armed Forces with the support of the U.S. government. The regime of terror produces 30,000 disappearances and drastically increases the national debt.



Leopoldo Galtieri, who was part of the Junta that carried out the 1976 coup, was trained at the SOA. Galtieri was de facto President in 1981-1982, and he declared the cruel war for the Malvinas conflict against Britain which cost the lives of 650 Argentine soldier

1970

1975



Richard Nixon
January 20th 1969
August 9th 1974



Gerald R. Ford
August 9th de 1974
January 20th de 1977

1980

1985

1990



James E. Carter
January 20th 1977
January 20th 1981



Ronald W. Reagan
January 20th 1981
January 20th 1989



George H. W.
January 20th
January 20th

Starting from the Second World War, the United States' deployment of foreign aid contributed to the global perception of the U.S. as the "great arsenal of democracy" (Shepardson, 37). Disproving the rhetoric of the US as the protector of democracy, Nelson-Pallmeyer's analysis of the School of the Americas (SOA) sheds light on the country's "self-serving [attempt to] militarize the world" (xvii). Supporting Nelson-Pallmeyer's critique of the U.S. foreign policy, the SOA Watch map of US interventionism in Latin America visually emphasizes the US' willingness to sacrifice democracy in Latin America in order to pursue its own economic, political, and strategic interests.

The public opinion is divided regarding the role of SOA within the US foreign policy. Those loyal to the US' democratic duty perceive the School as an aberration, a "rogue institution" consisting of "a few demented soldiers" (Nelson-Pallmeyer, xiii). They argue that the SOA diverges from the traditional US-American foreign policy and should thus not be considered as exemplary of the country's approach to foreign affairs. However, Nelson-Pallmeyer and the SOA Watch both reveal a different truth. The SOA is an "instrument of foreign policy" that perfectly illustrates the grounds for U.S. interventionism in Latin America (Nelson-Pallmeyer, xiii; SOA Watch).

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The abuse of power exerted through the SOA is widespread, complex, and systemic
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A first glance at the SOA Watch map is enough to confute the aberration theory. The abuse of power exerted through the SOA is widespread, complex, and systemic (Nelson-Pallmeyer, xvi). The map shows interventions in 19 different countries which could not have been organized without the support of the CIA and US officials (idem, xiii). If the SOA was a foreign policy aberration, why would the U.S lend it so much support? A closer look at the map shows an interesting pattern. Not only did the SOA perfectly embody US foreign policy values, it also served to carry out an anti-democracy agenda. Contrary to what one would expect from the "arsenal of democracy", the map shows that all SOA interventions supported military regimes and repressed democratic sentiments as well as popular movements.

The SOA's fight against liberation theology is one of the many US endeavours testifying to the manipulation of democratic values. While claiming to protect the world from the communist threat, the US engaged in "repressive policies targeting progressive church leaders" throughout Latin America (Nelson-Pallmeyer, 33). It is nothing but ironic that, while fighting in the name of democracy, the US supported tactics typical of a dictatorship: torture, murder, detention, and massacres (idem, 36). In a desperate attempt to pursue its mission against international communism, US generals favored the implementation of "a permanent state of military control over civilian government, while still preserving formal democracy" (33). In doing so, they achieved two main goals: first, they carried out a self-serving agenda against communism. Second, they maintained the facade of a democracy loving country while also stifling democratic attempts.

Nelson-Pallmeyer argues that while the SOA per se weakened foreign democracies, the US based movement to close the SOA can "revitalize [the] nation's democracy" (xix). According to his perspective, these movements have the potential to challenge the US on its harmful foreign policy, hence restoring the country's role as the bearer of democracy. However, the country's response to the movements so far leaves little room for hope.

Continuing its performative effort to support democracy, the US solely changed the name of the SOA and transformed it into the "Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation" (WHISC). The scope of the institution remains the same. Once again, the US claims to act under the call for democracy while in truth it keeps pursuing its own political agenda.

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Once again, the US claims to act under the call for democracy while in truth it keeps pursuing its own political agenda.

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Venezuela's Democratic Backsliding:

From Chavez's Delegative Democracy to Maduro's Full-Blown Authoritarianism.

Introduction

According to Guillermo O'Donnell, the international political system experienced two great waves of democratization: the first one, following World War II; the second one, during the 1970s and 1980s (65). In Latin America, the second democratic wave followed a long period of institutional military dictatorships that flourished in the region through the 60s and 70s (Vanden and Prevost, 203). O'Donnell identifies this period of long-lasting military rule as a contributing factor to the fragility of Latin America's democratic tradition. He argues that the new democracies inherited complex socio-economic issues (inflation, economic stagnation, flimsy welfare systems) that ultimately jeopardized the emergence →

of "democratic political institutions" (62 - 63). His theory is a useful ally to understand how countries like Argentina evolved first into delegative and, successively, consolidated democracies. However, if applied to Venezuela, O'Donnell's hypothesis results in a complex case study that transcends theoretical approximations. This paper will briefly discuss the Argentine democratic success while it will engage in a detailed analysis of Venezuela's democratic backsliding.

Unlike many of its regional neighbours, in the 70s Venezuela was considered a political miracle (Vanden and Prevost, 487).

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While many Latin Americans endured authoritarian violence and economic instability, Venezuela escaped the 60s-70s military rule and experienced unprecedented wealth (ibidem). Thanks to “a new oil boom”, employment decreased, inflation was under control, and welfare expenditures increased (ibidem). Venezuela thus experienced all the opposite circumstances that O’Donnell identified as contributing to a weak “network of institutionalized powers” (64). And yet, despite its unconventional advantage, Venezuela suffered from the same weak institutions and lack of horizontal accountability that affected post-authoritarian governments. In Venezuela, the transition to a democratically elected regime under Chavez’s did not lead to a second transition to a “consolidated democratic regime” (O’Donnell, 58). On the contrary, Chavez’s delegative democracy paved the way for Maduro’s “full-blown dictatorship” (Corrales, 51). Venezuela seems to have walked a path diametrically opposed to what O’Donnell has theorized: rather than evolving into an “institutionalized, consolidated democratic” regime, Chavez’s rule resulted in a democratic backslide (O’Donnell, 56)

**A Brief Excursus:
Delegative Democracy and
Argentina’s Successful Democratic Consolidation.→**

Guillermo O’Donnell theorized the existence of a “new species” which he calls a “delegative democracy” (O’Donnell, 55). Delegative democracies have been very common throughout Latin America, where the initial transition from an authoritarian rule to a democratically elected government did not always result in a consolidated democratic regime (idem, 56; 62). He characterizes delegative democracy as a government with a democratically elected, strong leader (who is typically portrayed as above all political parties) and a system of political institutions in disarray (idem, 60). Due to both the extreme individualism and the lack of established democratic institutions, delegative democracy is characterized by a lack of horizontal accountability: the institutions in place do not hold enough power to “call into question [...] improper ways of discharging the responsibilities of a given official” (idem, 61). One of the advantages of delegative democracy is that the lack of “a network of institutionalized power relations” allows for rapid policy making (idem, 62). An ideal consolidation of democracy consists in an evolution from delegative democracy to representative democracy. The latter entails a much stronger horizontal accountability with “relatively autonomous powers” partaking in decision making (idem, 62). **Continues on the next page →**

Argentina's political evolution during the 1990s proves the relevance of O'Donnell's theory to Latin American politics. Under Menem's regime, Argentina demonstrated some heavily "delegative tendencies" which caused concerns about his ability to leave power peacefully (Levitsky, 58). Despite Menem's abuses of power and his attempts to weaken Argentinian institutions, Argentine democracy has survived. Moving towards what O'Donnell had anticipated would be a second democratic transition, during the 1990s Argentina's democracy was consolidated. Enhancing overall "horizontal accountability", significant institutional innovations as well as the government's control over the military ensured Argentina's path towards a representative democracy. Much like O'Donnell had anticipated, Argentina's delegative democracy phase led to a lengthy learning curve that ultimately resulted in the "strengthening and legitimation" of democratic practices (68). In 2001, after president La Rúa resigned, Argentina entered a political crisis. three Peronist politicians were inaugurated and resigned in a matter of days. Despite the turmoil, the Argentine democratic institutions survived and the country ultimately performed a peaceful transition of power (Vanden and Prevost, 368). →

While Argentina speaks to the success of O'Donnell's theorization of democratic transitions, the Venezuelan case study offers an opportunity to explore instances in which new democracies regress to an authoritarian rule. Although Hugo Chavez was democratically elected in Venezuela, his regime did not "open avenues for institutionalized forms of democracy" (56). On the contrary, his delegative tendencies weakened the country's institutional network and facilitated the emergence of Maduro's authoritarian regime.

Chávez 's Delegative Democracy: "¡Que se vayan todos!"

Within the field of Latin American politics, the categorization of Chavez's regime has been "highly polarized and divergent" (Mainwaring, 955). Challenging the limits and possibilities of political theory, Chavez engaged in a combination of democratic and authoritarian practices that differed from conventional patterns. Showing great affinity to O'Donnell's delegative democracy, Chavez gained power through a clean election, engaged in extreme individualism, and ultimately eroded Venezuela's institutional network. **Continues on the next page →**

The resulting political scene was one eviscerated of “democratic checks and balances”, albeit it maintained enough of a performative democratic facade not to “invite international sanctions” (Mainwaring, 963). Chavez’s legacy, though, was something more than a path to authoritarianism: he left a political system that was easy to manipulate and an heir capable of meddling with institutions to ensure his survival.

The “democratic backsliding” that affected Venezuela arguably with the collapse of the patriarchy system culminated with Chavez’s election (Hetland, 20). A variety of factors contributed to the crash of Venezuela’s politics, but they can be summarized in three main categories: deep economic crisis, corruption scandals, and declining party identification (Mainwaring, 958). Exploiting the growing anti-party sentiments, Chavez portrayed himself as the one leader who could heal the nation by representing all Venezuelans (O’Donnell, 62; Mainwaring, 956). By the time he was elected, the people had lost faith in the two main parties (AD/COPEI) and Chavez seemed the only political figure to have responded to their call for “que se vayan todos!”: kick the old parties out of our politics. →

Though he himself is not entirely responsible for bringing down the partyarchy, “the demise of the old parties created an institutional vacuum that made it easier for Chavez to dismantle the old regime” (Mainwaring, 962). His political actions were channeled through the Movimiento Quinta Republica (MQR) but, in an attempt to maintain an anti-establishment rhetoric, he never portrayed it as a “party”; refusing to institutionalize the MQR, he claimed to be part of a “movement” (Hetland, 18). While his involvement in the erasure of Venezuela’s parties was his first attack on democratic institutions, it was not the last.

In order to compensate for the little efforts to institutionalize the MQR, Chavez strived to create “parallel structures” that would allow him to bypass the conventional, institutional channels (Hetland, 20). Juggling authoritarianism and democracy, he seized control of the state institutions to erode horizontal accountability while he also empowered the masses (Mainwaring, 962). Playing this double game allowed him to monopolize the country’s democratic machine without arousing suspicion.

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His endeavours to exert control over the country's state owned oil company, PDVSA, is an example of Chavez's ability to manipulate institutions to "serve goals other than the ones they were originally established to serve" (Corrales, 43). This phenomenon, referred to as "function fusion", was one of the authoritarian expedients used by Chavez during his semi-democratic rule (*ibidem*). His successor, Nicolas Maduro, inherited both weak institutions and an appreciation for function fusion from his predecessor. The result? "Full-fledged authoritarianism" (Corrales, 41).

Authoritarianism and Function Fusion Under Maduro.

As mentioned earlier, Venezuela's political past diverged from regional patterns. Similarly, the democratic backsliding that has taken place under Maduro has been uncommon both in terms of its depth and its long survival (Corrales, 40). Despite enduring pressure and sanctions from the majority of the international community (with the US and EU leading the opposition), Maduro has been able to hold on to his power. Though Maduro engaged in novel authoritarian practices to ensure his survival, he was aided by Chavez's previous attempts to erase horizontal accountability. →

During his rule, Maduro "has manipulated the presidential-election time table and voting centers, used government handouts to co-opt voters, banned candidates and parties, and refused to do real audits in response to vote-fraud charges" (Corrales, 41). Due to Chavez's earlier attack on the country's democratic machine, there was no "network of relatively autonomous powers [...]" that could question or punish Maduro's illegal actions (O'Donnell, 61). Besides taking advantage of the feeble institutions left by Chavez, Maduro protected his reign by bringing function fusion to the extreme (Corrales, 43).

Although function fusion was also part of Chavez's legacy (as shown by PDVSA), Maduro reinvented this practice and used to complete the transition from a semi-democracy to an effectively authoritarian regime. Proving to be relentless in his quest for power, Maduro has seized control of the military and tampered with its establishment to serve his purposes. Thanks to his intervention, the Venezuelan military now counts with multiple branches which are involved in a variety of spheres, ranging from illicit dealings to sales and water distributions (Corrales, 44). In Maduro's Venezuela, soldiers serve as both civilians and gangsters paid to oppress the masses (*ibidem*).

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Thanks to his ability to adapt the military institutions to any of his needs, Maduro has achieved full control over both licit and illicit business. In doing so, he has significantly expanded his power while also creating a system that allows him to deny his role in repression and violence (idem, 51).

Conclusion

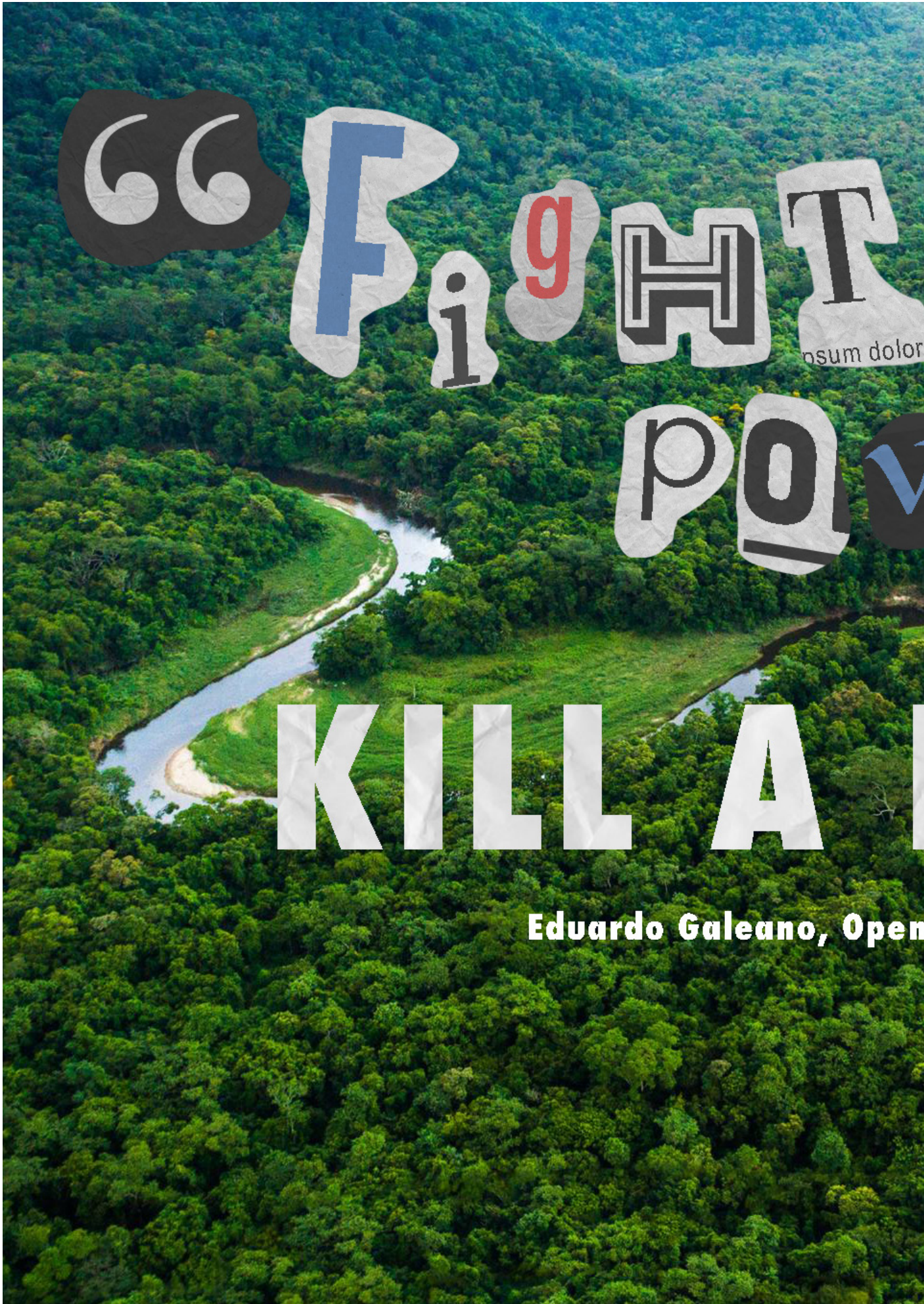
Venezuela's political history is unique. Unlike many of its regional neighbours, the country escaped the wave of authoritarian regimes that spread throughout the 60s-70s. Despite this early political victory, though, the country has failed to evolve into a consolidated representative democracy. Countries such as Argentina inherited weak institutional networks from previous dictatorships and, through delegative democracy, eventually reached the consolidation of democratic practices. In Argentina's case delegative democracy was thus a transitional phase that gave the country the opportunity to grow an interest in democratic institution building. Confirming the country's tendency to diverge from regional patterns, in Venezuela, Hugo Chavez's delegative democracy had quite the opposite effect. Rather than resulting in an enhanced desire for representative democracy, Chavez's rule weakened Venezuela's institutional network and eroded horizontal accountability. →

While Chavez himself was astute enough to combine his authoritarian practices with a democratic facade, his political strategy caused the country to fall under the control of an authoritarian ruler. Thanks to Chavez's legacy, Maduro was able to manipulate the Venezuelan democratic machine without facing resistance from other autonomous powers. Pushing Chavez's teachings to a new extreme, Maduro consolidated his authority by turning the military into a multi-purpose tool at his disposal. In Venezuela, delegative democracy paved the way for a democratic backsliding that continues to deteriorate by the day.

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BEGGAR

Veins of Latin America

Women's Sterilization in Brazil:

The Untold Story Behind Structural Adjustment Programs.

Introduction

During the 1970s - 1980s, Latin America became heavily reliant on foreign loans (Vanden and Prevost, 179). As debt spread among Latin American countries, international financial institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the Inter-American Development Bank became predominant economic actors in the region (ibidem). These organizations, together with the US, used their economic power to exert control over Latin America. Hoping to facilitate the propagation of free market ideals, these institutions used loans to impose specific conditions on the borrowing countries (idem, 180). If a country refused to implement the "suggested" structural adjustments to the local economy, the loan would be denied. →

When discussing the neo-liberal adjustments imposed on Latin America, there is great emphasis on the economic policies leading to trade liberalization. There is less conversation, however, on the imposition and implications of birth control plans as a condition for borrowing (Galeano, 17). Disguised as an effective way to eradicate poverty, family planning led to population control programs targeting the poor rather than poverty (Da Silva, 113).

Family Planning: a "Reproductive Revolution" to Eliminate Poverty – or the Poor?

The push for family planning flourished from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s. During those years, scholars interested in the modernization of poor countries came to see overpopulation as a crucial issue (Raulet, 211).

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They reinterpreted Malthus' concern about population growth and production limits, producing a neo-Malthusian philosophy (Robinson and Ross, 1). According to this school of thought, developing countries are stuck in an equilibrium trap wherein higher population growth hinders development (Raulet, 215). Industrialized countries welcomed this new doctrine as a call to embark on a population control journey throughout the Global South (idem). Driven by the desire to shape the modernization of the third world, between 1974 - 94, the World Bank launched what it called a "Reproductive Revolution". Actors like the United States, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the UN Population Fund endorsed the initiative and provided generous funding (Robinson and Ross, 2; 7). By the 1980s, declining fertility rates across the globe were used as proof that family planning was a successful tool for poverty reduction.

Exploiting the growing consensus on the inverse relationships between population growth on economic development, the World Bank imposed family planning policies throughout Latin America. →

In his "Open Veins of Latin America", Galeano notes that Robert McNamara, president of the World Bank from 1968 to 1981, gave priority loans to Latin American countries willing to implement birth control plans (idem, 15). The rationale behind McNamara's statement aligns with the overarching philosophy of the "Reproductive Revolution": overpopulation is the cause of poverty in developing countries, hence a decrease in fertility rates will lead to an increase in economic growth.

Notwithstanding the concern regarding overpopulation, many of the family planning interventions have taken place in under-populated areas. The Amazonia, for example, is "one of the least populated habitable zones on our planet" and yet one that was heavily targeted (Galeano, 18). Similarly, the overall myth of Latin America's overpopulation falls short when looking at the regions' demographics: the majority of the nations in the region are short on people (idem, 18). Hence, a question arises naturally: why is the "First World" so relentless about reducing fertility rates in Latin America, if the region is not truly overpopulated?

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Sterilization in Brazil: Family Planning or Population Control?

“Fight poverty, kill a beggar!” (Galeano, 15): a dark yet revealing image that vividly describes the approach of neoliberal institutions to eradicate poverty in Latin America. The demographics speak for themselves: Latin America is not threatened by overpopulation. Take Brazil, for example, a country roughly as big as the United States (refer to Figure 1 on the right and figure 2 in the next page for a comparison of these two countries’ demographics). The Brazilian population amounts to 211 million inhabitants, a much smaller number than the 328 million people living in the US (Da Silva, 112). Likewise, the Brazilian population density is much lower than industrialized countries such as Italy (Galeano, 17). According to the statistics, overpopulation does not represent a threat to Brazilian. And yet, between 1970 and 1985, Brazil was forced to experience a dramatic decrease in fertility rates (Rutenberg and Ferraz, 61). Roughly at the same time as neoliberalism spread across the region (after the 1970s), the World Bank gave Brazil “over 600 million dollars to set up family planning institutions in the seven poorer states in the country” (Da Silva, 112). **Continues on the**

28 **next page** →



U.S: DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMIC GROWTH



**9.8 MILLION
SQ.KM**

**328 MILLION
PEOPLE**

36

People per sq. km

1.7

Births per woman

65, 298

**GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
PER CAPITA IN \$**

DATA RETRIEVED FROM THE WORLD BANK
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Based on the consensus that high population growth hinders economic development (Raulet, 217), family planning was imposed on Brazil with the promise of economic prosperity (Da Silva, 112). The resulting mass sterilization, however, solely exacerbated existing inequalities and resulted in what is sometimes referred to as a “genocide” (The Hastings Center, 2).

Despite the emphasis on a “Reproductive Revolution”, family planning in Brazil neglected all forms of birth control except for sterilization (Da Silva, 112). According to testimonies like Da Silva’s, poor, black, and indigenous women experienced the highest rates of sterilization (up to 80% in the poorest regions of the country) (idem, 111). For the most part, sterilized women did not receive the information necessary to understand what the procedure entailed (idem, 112). Hence, poor women were deprived of their right to conceive without their active consent. The message behind these interventions was clear: if you are poor, you lack the agency to decide over your own body; by taking away your right to reproduce, we are guaranteeing that you do not birth any more poor babies. **Continues on the next page →**

Not only is this rationale deeply racist, it also disregards a key aspect of poverty eradication: “sterilization doesn’t guarantee that a woman will find a job, a school for her kids, or a decent house to live in” (Da Silva, 112). Reducing the population size may reduce the number of poor people, but it does not ever guarantee that they will escape the poverty trap. The emphasis on population control convinces people that they are poor because their families are too big, while hiding the real truth: they are poor because the system is not designed to protect them (Galeano, 16).

In Brazil, US-funded family planning targeted the poor rather than tackling the systemic issues resulting in poverty (Da Silva, 113). While sterilization failed to eradicate poverty, it was a useful tool to carry out a Western political agenda. In particular, Da Silva notes neoliberal actors driven by consumerism used population control to disguise their lust for Brazil’s natural resources (idem, 113). The spread of neo-Malthusian ideas did not spare the environment. Exploiting the neo-Malthusian over-simplifications in regards to population and resources, the West came to the conclusion that the Brazilian population was the leading cause of environmental degradation (Hogan; Castro et al.; Da Silva, 113). →

Hence, it was the responsibility of western institutions to ensure that Brazilians reduce their population (Da Silva, 113). This time, mass sterilization was sold as a philanthropic action to protect the environment. However, a closer look at the global climate crisis shows that Brazilians have little to do with the deterioration of their ecosystems. Far from being attributable to population growth, the Brazilian environmental degradation is driven by global market forces (Fearnside, 23). The excessive demands for soybeans, cocoa, and cattle production are among the key products responsible for the widespread deforestation in Brazil (WWF). The majority of the goods responsible for the environment’s exploitation are produced to satisfy the requests of the richest countries, while very little is destined to the Brazilian population. While the poor of Brazil bear no responsibility for the country’s environmental degradation, they are decimated to make space for the demands of the West. Once again, Latin America is perceived “as a menial [...] at the service of other’s needs” and its people seen as disposable (Galeano, 11).

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Conclusion

In a plot that resembles a dystopian novel, the West is decimating Latin America to make up for its unsustainable demands. Disguised as a promise for prosperity, the “Reproductive Revolution” in Latin America solely exacerbated the region’s subjugation by the West. Rooted in the Malthusian concern over the scarcity of resources, family planning emerged in the 1970s as a tool to eradicate poverty. International financial institutions believed that the root of poverty in underdeveloped countries was an increasing population growth which would diminish the resources available to the masses. They hence saw family planning as the perfect solution to bring down fertility rates and, according to their logic, eradicate poverty.

In Latin America, family planning became a synonym for population control. Family planning campaigns resulted in mass sterilization of poor and uninformed women. Although the region’s fertility rate diminished, the policy has not been successful in eradicating poverty. Turning into a grotesque attempt to target the poor rather than poverty itself, population control has also served as a tool to suppress the call for a redistribution of wealth. →

As the West claims a bigger share of resources, fewer goods are available to the rest of the global population. Due to the imbalance in the distribution chain, poverty rates go up in regions of the world like Latin America where people are disenfranchised of their fair share of goods. So, while the capitalist market keeps demanding more resources, the West has come up with a strategy to silence the beggars’ cries. What better than family planning disguised as population control? By removing the beggars from the equation, they can claim to have eradicated poverty: no other voices will be left behind to say otherwise.

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Appendix

School of the Americas Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation



1946-Present

- ★ The School of the Americas is a military training school for Latin American soldiers, located in Fort Benning, Georgia. Renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001, the school has been producing assassins, death squad leaders and human rights abusers for dirty work in Latin America since its founding in 1946.
- ★ Dubbed the 'School of Assassins,' the SOA/WHINSEC is a school that is synonymous with torture and military repression for millions around the world. Graduates of the school have a long history of participating in and orchestrating killings, targeted violence and the suppression of popular movements. Research continues to turn up SOA graduate involvement in human rights violations across the Americas.
- ★ Around 1000 soldiers train at the SOA/WHINSEC each year, where courses are taught in Spanish. The institute is paid for with U.S. taxpayer dollars, money for foreign military training that is authorized by Congress.
- ★ In 1996, the Pentagon, under intense public pressure, released training manuals used at the school for over a decade that advocated torture, extortion and execution.
- ★ Among those targeted by SOA graduates are union organizers, students, religious workers, educators, and others who work for the justice. Hundreds of thousands of have been tortured, raped, assassinated, 'disappeared', or forced into refuge by those trained at the School of Assassins.
- ★ The purpose of the SOA/WHINSEC is, and has always been, to control the economic and political system of Latin America by aiding and influencing Latin American militaries. The SOA/WHINSEC is not an aberration of U.S. foreign policy but a clear illustration of it. The map on the right provides some examples of U.S. interventions in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- ★ Countries with the worst human rights record have consistently sent the most soldiers to the school. For example: Bolivia during the reign of terror of SOA graduate Hugo Banzer; Nicaragua during the Somoza family dictatorship; El Salvador during the period of bloodiest repression; Mexico after the '94 Indigenous uprising; and currently Colombia.

Get involved with groups who are working to end U.S. intervention in the Americas:

School of the Americas Watch - soaw.org, Center for Constitutional Rights - ccrjustice.org, ImaginAction - imaginaction.org, SOAW East Bay (CA), Rights Action - rightsaction.org, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns - maryknoll.org, Veterans for Peace - veteransforpeace.org, Office of the Americas - officeoftheamericas.org, Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala - nisgua.org, Alliance for Global Justice, atgj.org, South Florida SOA Watch / SouthCom Watch, War Resisters League - warresisters.org, Portland SOA Watch - soawpdx.org, Mayday Books - maydaybookstore.org, SOAW Latina - soawlatina.org, Long Island SOA Watch, Hondurans for Democracy - porlademocracia.org, Witness against Torture - witnessfortorture.org, Addicted to War - addictedtowar.org, Austin SOA Watch - soaw-austin.org, 8th Day Center for Justice - 8thdaycenter.org, Grandmothers for Peace International - grandmothersforpeace.org, SOAWatch Puget Sound, Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice - icpj.org, El Buen Amigo Latin American Cultural Association - elbuenamigo.org, SOA Watch San Francisco - soaw-w.org, CNY SOA Abolitionists - peacecouncil.net/clac/soa.htm, North American Congress on Latin America - nacla.org, El Enemigo Común - enemigocomun.net, Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador - cispep.org, La Voz de los de Abajo - honduraresista.blogspot.com, Global Exchange - globechange.org, Los Angeles SOA Watch, Interconnect - interconn.org, Campaign to Stop Killer Coke - killercoke.org, Left Turn Magazine - leftturn.org, Witness for Peace - witnessforpeace.org, Portland Central America Solidarity Committee - pcasc.net, NYC SOA Watch, New Mexico SOA Watch, United for Peace and Justice - unitedforpeace.org, Haiti Action Committee - haitisolidarity.net, InterReligious Task Force on Central America - IRTFcentral.org, M.E.Ch.A. - nationalmecha.org, Dream City Collective (DC)

In the beginning of the 19th Century, the U.S. claims its right to intervene in Latin American affairs to further U.S. interests. The "Monroe Doctrine" of 1823 was put to practice in 1846 with the declaration of war on Mexico and the take of extensive territories including California and Texas. In 1898, the U.S. declares war on Spain in order to take Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines and Hawaii. In 1912, Marines invade and occupy Nicaragua until 1933. Over the first half of the 20th Century, the U.S. interferes with internal affairs of Cuba, Dominican Republic, Colombia; provoking Panama's breakup in order to control that strategic point- among other countries. This graphic shows some of the later interventions.



Guatemala 1954
Coup d'état is organized by the CIA against the democratically-elected President Jacobo Arbenz, which leads to more than 30 years of dictatorship, violence and repression. CIA paid assets were directly responsible for torture, executions and other crimes against humanity.

El Salvador 1980-1992

The CIA played a fundamental role in the development of security agencies from which paramilitary groups in El Salvador emerged. During the Salvadoran Civil War, the U.S. gave financial support to successive military governments for more than 5 billion dollars. The war caused 75,000 deaths and 8,000 disappeared people.

Honduras 2009

U.S. Army School of the Americas trained soldiers overthrew the democratically elected government of Manuel Zelaya. While a repressive campaign against the ensuing resistance is unleashed, the U.S. refuses to call the this overthrow a military coup and undermines efforts to restore democracy.



Costa Rica 2010

The U.S. Navy plans to deploy 46 warships with 7,000 Marines to Costa Rica under the guise of the "war on drugs." Following opposition and legal challenges by human rights activists, Costa Rica refuses docking permits for the U.S. military ships in 2011.

Panamá 1964

January 9th of '64, remembered as "The day of the martyrs" by so many, U.S. personnel silence the protesting voices against their presence and control over the Panama Canal. The results are 28 deaths, 300 injured and 500 arrests.



Colombia 2009

The U.S. announces the deployment of U.S. military forces at seven military bases in Colombia to "conduct full spectrum operations throughout South America" and against "anti-U.S. governments" in the region.



1999
The U.S. Congress approves 1.3 billion dollars in assistance with the majority for military and police support. More than a million peasant farmers have been forced from rural zones caused by scorched earth policy of Colombian military and paramilitary forces under U.S. guidance.

1989

The U.S. invades the country under the pretext of arresting Manuel Noriega. U.S. forces of 27,000 soldiers bomb the population killing more than 2,000 people.

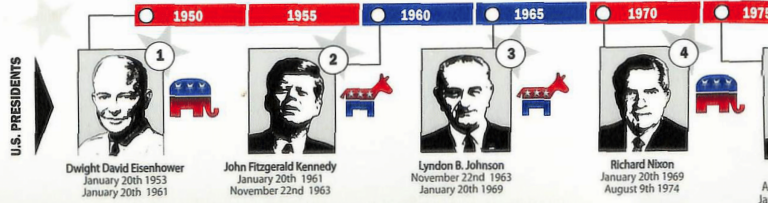


Bolivia 1967

Che Guevara is murdered by the Bolivian army with the assistance of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Chile 1973

Coup d'état led by general Pinochet with support of the CIA and the U.S. government. It ends with the death of the president Salvador Allende and the installation of a cruel dictatorship.



Cuba 1955-2011
 Invasion of Bay of Pigs by "anticastroists" supported by the CIA and the U.S. They were defeated by Cuban revolutionaries.
 After that, 49 conspiracies occurred - including murder attempts on Fidel Castro-, economic embargo, and propaganda campaigns against the Cuban government.

Haiti 2004
 Democratically-elected President Jean Bertrand Aristide is ousted in a coup and taken by force from his country by U.S. and French military operatives. Aristide was the first elected president in Haiti's 200-year history.

Dominican Republic 1963-1965
 The propaganda campaign against president Juan Bosch ends with a coup d'état. The U.S. sends 22,000 soldiers to fight the constitutionalist forces that are fighting for the return of Bosch.

Venezuela 2002-2004
 In April of 2002 a coup d'état takes place with the support of the U.S. government. President Chavez is able to regain control of the country days later. Destabilizing actions keep happening. The National Endowment for Democracy, which depends on the U.S. Congress, sent a million dollars to opposition groups.

Nicaragua 1981-1990
 The CIA and the U.S. government finance and support with its military the "Contras" that release a terrorist war against the "Sandinistas" of Nicaragua. The "Contras" murder civilians, bomb ports and spread terror.

Brasil 1964
 The CIA carries out an extensive propaganda campaign against President João Goulart, which culminates with a coup d'état. Goulart had started a series of reforms that limited the profits of transnational companies. He also nationalized a subsidiary of ITT.

Argentina 1976-1983
 Coup d'état by the Argentine Armed Forces with the support of the U.S. government. The regime of terror produces 30,000 disappearances and drastically increases the national debt.

Uruguay 1976
 On July 4th, 24 Uruguayan and Chilean political refugees that documents are being kidnapped and tortured by intelligence Chile and Uruguay, as a part of the "Operation Condor", defined by the Department of Defense as "Code given to persecution of left communists and Marxists in the Southern Cone."

Timeline of U.S. Presidents:
 5. Gerald R. Ford (1977-1977)
 6. James E. Carter (1977-1981)
 7. Ronald W. Reagan (1981-1989)
 8. George H. W. Bush (1989-1993)
 9. William Jefferson Clinton (1993-2001)
 10. George Walker Bush (2001-2009)
 11. Barack Obama (2009-Present)

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