

Democracy in the final quarter of the 20th century in latin america

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Why did so many countries turn to democracy in the final quarter of the 20th Century in Latin America? Illustrate your answer with examples. A large number of countries in Latin America turned to democracy in the final quarter of the 20th century due to a combination of internal political pressure, failures of military and authoritarian regimes as well as the reduction of external foreign pressures. In the wake of the Second World War, the Cold War sprung up giving rise to the capitalist and communist camps. The struggle for global domination between these two camps assumed most of the world's geographic regions in the wake of the Second World War. The proximity of the United States to the Latin American region also meant that the struggle was intense and largely supported by the US in an attempt to buttress its hegemony in the region (Bethell, 2009).

The seventies saw the emergence of leftist ideas in Latin American nations. The political military elite of these nations saw the rise of leftist ideas as a threat to the already established systems of governance. In order to protect their nations from leftist ideology, the ruling elite turned to more authoritarian forms of government such as military dictatorships. The example of Chile, Argentina, Venezuela and many other Latin American countries supports this idea. These regimes often employed brute tactics to weed out the leftist factions and to avoid armed struggle against the central governments. Harrowing tales of murder, political assassinations, rape, plundering, confiscation of property and the like are rampant in Latin America from the time. Chile's dictator Auguste' Pinochet for example is famous for blatant elimination of his political opponents without any trials. The struggle in Nicaragua that put the Sandinista regime in charge was

marked with blood and violence to fortify the seat of power. These actions on the part of these regimes infused a spirit of freedom from oppression in the masses in these nations (Skidmore & Smith, 2005). It is therefore no surprise that there were myriad leftist armed struggles in Latin America that were calling for regime change by the final quarter of the twentieth century.

The entanglement of these military regimes in armed struggles also meant that the economy had to pay a heavy price. In certain other cases such as Argentina, the economy turned to shambles due to nepotism, mismanagement and usurpation of public resources (Stein & Hunt, 2007). It was common practice for military regimes to take onto armed adventures in order to divert public attention from the state of the economy. For example the Argentinean military regime was made famous by its myopic decision to invade the Falklands that exposed the Argentinean military's weakness against a formidable British military. The resulting defeat led people to the streets of Buenos Aires who could no longer tolerate a government that failed to deliver on all fronts simultaneously. The resulting change brought a lasting democracy that was strengthened by notions of the failure of the military to lead the country.

Another major factor that lead to the rise of democracy in the Latin American region was the reduced intervention on the part of the capitalist and communist blocks. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had taken a centre focus on the world stage and both camps were concentrating more on the Asian region than elsewhere. Consequently the active interest in the Latin American region declined causing a decrease in military aid and social aid spending in the region. Lowered aid levels put the indigenous governments

in more trouble and ultimately led to their removal from office.

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