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Chapter 9 and 10 Response

Latin America in the modern day is in an interesting place, especially in regards to its future development and place on the world stage. It has failed, in many ways, to live up to its potential quite yet but is seemingly trying to do so. There are countless factors at play here, but the two most important ones are the failure of institutions and the lingering effects of colonialism.

No one is questioning the fact that Latin America's political institutions have failed it for the last century or more. The region has semi-regular coups, dictatorships, and continuous corruption. It is hard enough to develop a country when dealing with difficult geography, but when the government is constantly changing and almost universally corrupt there is little belief that it is possible to get out of poverty. This is not something that can be solved with the flip of a switch, but it is something that *is* solveable. Latin America as a whole is making strides in this direction, but for every positive step forward--think what you want of Milei, he is a liberal economist who won the presidency in Argentina, that is progress--there is a step back like Venezuela's attempts to take the Essequibo region from Guyana. In many senses natural resources are the building blocks of a high-tier economy, but as is proven by much of Latin America, they are not a guarantee of success.

Regarding the legacy of colonialism, I do not think it is fair to put the entirety of the blame for the current state of Latin America on colonial^[^1] powers, but it is undeniable that they had a large impact on the region which is still being felt culturally, politically, and economically today. The most obvious example of this is the fact that the majority of Latin America speaks Spanish or Portuguese, and that the majority of the population is Catholic. These are not bad things unto themselves, just an obvious example - a more malignant example are the lingering cultural divisions put in place under the Casta system. While for all intents and purposes the Casta system is dead, in reality it is alive and well in terms of individual prejudice and societal norms. This is not something that can be outlawed or cancelled into submission, but will require time and understanding to overcome. In terms of economics, the long-term effects are clear: Latin America is still a resource-based, agricultural economy. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with agriculture or resource extraction, but it is not a path to long-term economic success. Colonial powers wanted their possessions to be sources of raw materials and consumers of finished goods, manufacturing those finished goods was a privilege reserved for the mother country. Thus, no industrial revolution was fostered in Latin America, and the region is still playing catch-up. They are trying a strange skip-to-the-end strategy wherein they only build minimal industries and just skip to services, but this is a flawed strategy in my opinion.

In conclusion, Latin America has a high-ceiling but is currently underperforming. It is by no means a lost cause, but the legacy of colonialism and total institutional failure are holding it back from its potential. I am optimistic that the region will improve, and become a real player on the world stage, but it will take time and effort.

^[^1] And depending on your political persuasion, neo-colonial(not a big fan) powers.