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Chapter 8 Response

Latin America is one of the most dramatically geographically diverse regions in the world, with a wide variety of climates, landmasses, and resources as a result. This disparate geography has led to large cultural, economic, and political divergences across the region which would generally be expected to be comparatively cohesive due to language and colonial history. These are most manifestly clear in the economic and political differences between the southern/eastern Latin American countries, notably Brazil and Argentina, and the northern/western Latin American countries, notably Mexico, Venezuela, and Colombia - the former group is generally more developed and stable than the latter, though both face significant challenges.

The comparative stability of the southern/eastern countries is due in large part to their post-colonial history and geography--not being part of Bolivar's Gran Colombia, they were not subject to the constant ensuing civil wars and eventual development into unstable dictatorships and economic puppets of the United States. Instead, they were able to develop comparatively stable democratic governments and economies, with Brazil in particular becoming a major economic power(though one that has not reached its potential yet for a variety of reasons). In relation to their geography, the Amazon rainforest has been a major boon to Brazil, providing large quantities of natural resources and the more temperate climate in southern Brazil and Argentina has allowed for massive agricultural development(Argentina, notably, is a major agricultural exporter). While these nations have some of their own economic and political problems--shoutout to Javier Milei, going to try and fix Argentina's economy--they are generally far more developed and stable than their northern counterparts.

The northern/western countries, on the other hand, have been subject to a variety of problems--largely due to their geography, and thus proximity to the United States and European powers. While Mexico might be something of an outlier in this pattern due to sharing a border with the United States and thus gaining a lot of economic benefit from direct trade, it is still under continual threat from drug cartels and has a *long* history of political instability. Venezuela and Colombia are the poster-children for this pattern with their oil resources not proving to be economic boons, but rather resource traps of the highest order leading to nothing but coup after coup and civil war after civil war. The United States has also been a major player in this instability, with the CIA having a long history of meddling in Latin American politics and supporting dictators and coups in the region. This has led to a long history of anti-American sentiment in the region, which has been a major factor in the rise of left-wing populism in the region, notably in Venezuela and Bolivia. In addition, the constant instability across the entire Northern/Eastern region and into central America has led to a massive refugee crisis, with millions of people fleeing the region due to lack of economic opportunity and danger from drug cartels, gangs, and corrupt governments^[1]. This has led to a massive humanitarian crisis, with the United States and other countries in the region being forced to deal with the influx of refugees.

In conclusion, Latin America is a region of massive diversity, with a wide variety of climates, landmasses, and resources. This has led to a wide variety of economic and political outcomes, with the southern/eastern countries generally being in more favorable economic and political positions than the Northern/Western countries. Latin America is similar to Africa in many ways, a huge economic and political potential being squashed by ineffective institutions. Hopefully, the region will be able to overcome these challenges and reach its potential(Milei is certainly a step in the right direction for Argentina).

[^1]: Off topic, but this could have been(and still can be) a major opportunity for the United States to dramatically grow its population, increase birth rates(first and second generation immigrants have more children), and increase its economic and political power. We could let in millions of refugees, give them citizenship, let them work and live here, and do exactly what we did for millions of German, Italian, Irish, and Polish(among others) immigrants in the last two centuries. Instead, we're vilifying them and treating them like criminals. Putting aside the moral arguments, it makes no sense from a purely economic and political perspective.