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State and Society in Latin America

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By: Kshiyama Sagar Mehier



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Content

STATE AND SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

Question Paper—June-2024 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—December-2023 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—June-2023 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—December-2022 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—Exam Held in March-2022 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—Exam Held in August-2021 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—Exam Held in February-2021 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—December, 2019 (Solved)	1-2
Question Paper—June, 2019 (Solved)	1-2
Question Paper—December, 2018 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—June, 2018 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—December, 2017 (Solved)	1
Question Paper—June, 2017 (Solved)	1

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
1.	Colonial Legacy	1
2.	Resource Endowment and the Impact on Social and Economic Formations – I	12
3.	Resource Endowment and the Impact on Social and Economic Formations – II	21
4.	Political Traditions and Political Culture	30
5.	Inward-looking Development Strategies	40
6.	Economic Liberalization and Global Dependence in Latin America	49
7.	Current Discourse on State and Market	56
8.	Populist Movements and Regimes	64

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
9.	Agrarian and Land Rights Movements	74
10.	Church and Social Change in Latin America	81
11.	Revolutionary Movements and Social Change	87
12.	Democratic Transitions: Patterns, Mechanisms and Processes	96
13.	Democratic Constitutions and Institution Building	104
14.	Civil Society and 'New' Social Movements	114
15.	Military in Politics	124
16.	Regionalism in Latin America	135
17.	Latin America and the Developing Countries	143
18.	Latin America and the Developed Countries/Regions	149



**Sample Preview
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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2024

(Solved)

STATE AND SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

M.P.S.E.-2

Time: 2 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 50

Note: Answer any five questions. Attempt at least two questions from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION-I

Q. 1. Explain the colonial economic structure of Latin America.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-1, Page No. 5-6, Q. No. 1.

Q. 2. Describe the system of indentured labour in Guyana and Trinidad.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 26-27, Q. No. 2.

Q. 3. Discuss briefly the legacy of the institution of slavery in Latin America.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 37, Q. No. 4.

Q. 4. Explain some of the political and economic factors responsible for adopting inward development strategy.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 45, Q. No. 2.

Q. 5. Describe the economic liberalisation and global dependence in Latin America.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 49-50, 'Economic Liberalization and Global Dependency'.

SECTION-II

Q. 6. Write short note on the following:

(a) Latin American Populist Movements.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 68-69, Q. No. 1.

(b) Peasant and Land Rights Movements.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-9, Page No. 76, 'Peasant and Land Rights Movements'.

Q. 7. Explain the revolutionary movements in Latin America.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 92, Q. No. 2.

Q. 8. Briefly explain the working of democratic processes in Latin America.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 99, 'Challenging Democratic Conditionalities'.

Q. 9. Examine the role of civil society in the democratisation process.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 121-122, Q. No. 3.

Q. 10. Critically examine the military regime in Latin American Politics.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 124-125, 'Military in Latin American Politics'.



QUESTION PAPER

December – 2023

(Solved)

STATE AND SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

M.P.S.E.-2

Time: 2 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 50

Note: Answer any five questions. Attempt at least two questions from each section. All questions carry equal marks.

SECTION-I

Q. 1. Why is Latin America considered a prisoner of its colonial legacy?

Ans. Latin America is often described as a “prisoner” of its colonial legacy due to the lasting social, political, and economic structures established during European colonization, which have continued to shape the region’s development. Here are the main reasons:

1. Social Stratification: The colonial era established rigid social hierarchies based on race, with Europeans at the top, followed by people of mixed descent, Indigenous peoples, and enslaved Africans. These divisions have persisted, contributing to inequality and social exclusion.

2. Land Distribution: During colonization, vast tracts of land were granted to European settlers and the elite, leaving Indigenous populations and later generations of locals with limited access to land. This has resulted in ongoing land ownership disputes and economic disparity.

3. Economic Dependency: Colonial powers structured Latin America’s economy to serve European needs, focusing on resource extraction (like minerals and agriculture) and export-oriented production. Even after independence, many countries remained dependent on exporting raw materials and importing finished goods, which hindered economic diversification and development.

4. Political Systems: Colonial rulers imposed centralized and authoritarian political systems. After independence, many Latin American nations continued to struggle with weak democratic institutions, frequent military interventions, and political instability.

5. Cultural Legacy: European languages, religion (particularly Catholicism), and cultural practices were imposed on Indigenous populations, often at the expense of local traditions. This cultural dominance continues to influence societal norms, education, and identity.

These colonial legacies have entrenched inequality, limited economic growth, and contributed to the

region’s struggles with governance, all of which are challenges that persist today.

Q. 2. Explain the significance of Chile’s resource endowment in its history of development.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 16-17, ‘Importance of Minerals: Chile’.

Q. 3. Describe the treatment meted out to indigenous people in colonial Mexico.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 22, ‘Land and the Indian Communities in Mexico’.

Q. 4. “Military Intervention is a continuing feature of Latin American politics.” Comment.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 130, Q. No. 1

Q. 5. What are Bureaucratic Authoritarian regimes? Explain with reference to Latin America.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 125-127, ‘Bureaucratic Authoritarian Regimes’.

SECTION-II

Q. 6. Explain the ‘Classical Populist’ movements in Latin American politics.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 64, ‘Introduction’ and ‘Populist Movements and Regimes’.

Q. 7. Explain the modes and experiences of Latin American countries in transition of democracy.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-13, Page No. 112-113, Q. No. 1.

Q. 8. Explain the role and impact of Foreign Direct Investment in Latin America.

Ans. 8 Ref.: See Chapter-18, Page No. 153-154, Q. No. 2.

Q. 9. How is ‘MERCOSUM’ different from ‘NAFTA’? Which you think is a more viable grouping?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-16, Page No. 141, Q. No. 4.

Q. 10. Examine the nature of relationship between Latin America and the Asia Pacific.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-18, Page No. 150-151, ‘Latin America and the Asia-Pacific Region’. ■■

Sample Preview of The Chapter

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STATE AND SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

Colonial Legacy



INTRODUCTION

Latin America has a lot of diversity in terms of its peoples, societies, geographies and resources. The region however, has some common features in the language, culture and institutions. Latin America's peculiarity lies in its social and historical background which is a mixture of indigenous and colonial legacies. It is different from the British colonial legacy of North America because of the Iberian socio-political tradition with strong roots in Roman Catholic law and Catholicism. Latin American countries cannot be treated as part of the Western world even as they are a part of the Western capitalist world economy. These countries also cannot be categorized as the Third World nations as they are more developed as compared to the developing countries. The region can be understood on the basis of its key themes of tradition and development and in terms of its unique Greco-Roman-Hispanic style and institution.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LEGACY

It was the pre-industrial period when Latin America was ruled as colonies by the Iberian powers – Spain and Portugal. The wealth from the region was exploited by the colonizers to finance capitalism in Europe. The mining of silver in the Latin America, for example, contributed a lot towards the development of the European economy. Silver mining during 1560-70s in the region was one of the sectors with the largest scale of production. At that time, it was also the most intensive use of capital in the world economy.

The *conquistadores* exploited the indigenous people of the Aztecs and the Incas. The Amerindians were sent to work on the mines in Mexico and Peru or they were confined to their villages as oppressed and impoverished. In the last quarter of the 16th century after the invasion of the Spanish forces, the existing structure and demographic dynamics were destroyed in the region. A rigid socio-economic two class structure of the Spanish overlords and the indigenous populations of peasants emerged. The semi-feudal *encomienda/hacienda* and the capitalist plantations came into existence. Under the *encomienda* system, the conquerors were granted by the Crown, the right of Indian labour with the obligation to evangelise the indigenous population. These grants of land could not be inherited except by special permission. However, the system was abused as the edicts were not properly enforced. The grants of labour became *de facto* grants of land.

Feudalism, which was fading away from Europe, found a new lease of life in Latin America. The Spanish Crown rewarded the conquerors and the lower nobility with grants of land to make them loyal and to keep them from rebelling against the Crown. *Repartimiento* (division) of Indian labour was also introduced to allocate labour for public work which included work on private estates and ranches and mines. They also rationalized the forced labour on grounds that even the ancient Inca rulers in Peru had used forced labour called *mita*. They also imported African slaves from across the Atlantic to the region.

The Portuguese started colonizing the Latin America in a similar manner, but they were more relaxed, easy-going and largely limited their colonies

2 / NEERAJ : STATE AND SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

to the coast. The browns and the blacks were considered inferior to the Whites. In the practice of racialism, slave labour and other forms of exploitation were justified. The Portuguese were the first among the European to make slave raids and purchase of slaves from African chiefs on the west coast of Africa. With large scale import of African slaves, slave-plantation systems were set up in Brazil and the Caribbean region.

The Atlantic slave trade continued from 1451 to 1870. About 10 million slaves were transported, of which 1.6 million were transported to Spanish America, 3.6 million to Brazil, 2 million to British colonies (including USA) and 1.6 million to the French Caribbean. The industrial revolution in Britain was supported by slave-based plantations which produced rum, sugar and other tropical products. Many of the manufactures from Britain were obtained by selling these products.

The agrarian structure patterned to suit the interests of the colonizers led to the evolution of the *hacienda* system. It was a feudal system as the *hacendado* had complete lordship over the estate. The peasants who worked the *hacienda* were totally under his protection. It was also a capitalist enterprise as it generated wealth for the lord. It produced commodities like coffee, sugar and tobacco for the world market. The *hacienda* system was self-contained socially, politically, economically and religiously.

The structure of the society was hierarchical and based on colour. Various royal officials - *encomenderos* and *corregidores* - exercised the authority. The Whites including the Spaniards (born in Spain) and the Criollo - the people of Spanish origin born in Latin America, were at the top of the social ladder. They were the landlords and the merchants. The indigenous peoples or Amerindians followed by the slaves imported from Africa were at the bottom of the ladder. The *mulattos*, the offspring of the Criollo and the Blacks, were placed in between. The *mestizos*, the offspring of the Whites and the Amerindians, were placed higher than the *mulattos* in the social order. It was closer to feudal Europe. The aims of landlords were also mercantile and not to widened their political power. The landlords were however, the subjects of the Crown rather than vassals. The Amerindians' condition was however, as bad as those of the serfs in Europe.

These were the roots of Latin America's unfortunate history of dependency on European economy. It became entangled with international capitalism.

The upper class focused on strengthening the landed oligarchy and fulfilled the requirements of advancing capitalism in Europe. They exploited the abundant natural resources of the region and exported raw materials to Europe and the United States. The governing elite selected policies for growth rather than those for development.

POLITICAL LEGACY

The *conquistadores* came to Latin America not as colonizers but as military campaigners. They were also not racially prejudiced as the colonizers of North America. They intermingled with the indigenous peoples in Latin America.

The Spanish colonial legacy was the roots of the Latin American tradition of political absolutism and arbitrary rule. The Spanish semi-feudal institutions badly affected the areas where their presence was strong, whereas in areas where the Spanish presence was weaker, a stronger sense of self-reliance developed. The region however, saw a complex mix of Spanish and indigenous cultures though the Spanish was the dominant one.

Elitism, hierarchy, a two-class system, patrimonialism, corporatism, militarism and authoritarianism became durable features in this region due to the colonial legacy.

Centralization of Authority: The political tradition in Latin America was centralized to the core. The structure was vertically organized. The authoritarian power emanated from the Spanish Crown to the viceroy to the *hacendado* or the landowner. Viceroys were designated in place of the king to be located in Mexico City (1535), Lima (1544) and later in New Granada (Colombia, 1739) and the River Plate (Argentina, 1776). Under the viceroy came the major corporate and vested interests: the Church, the military and the elite. The viceroys, who functioned as regional courts of appeal, were assisted by a series of councils. The governance was not smooth because of the distance and the vastness of the area being administered. Portugal also established a similar system of administration in Brazil, but it was never as powerful as the Spanish one. But both the systems were affected by corruption among the officials. Colonizers, be it the *encomenderos*, the *corregidores* or the officials of the *audiencias*, took it as an opportunity to enrich themselves.

Having benefited from the colonial institutions, the elite became dependent on their Iberian past, economically on Britain and culturally on France. This trend set the course of governance system in Latin

America. The elite chose to institutionalize the past rather than change it. Most of the nations except Brazil chose a republican form of government in which almost all powers were placed in the hands of the President. A few elite picked out the President. In Brazil, a powerful emperor ruled for most of the 19th century. The old landed classes and the new commercially active classes joined hands to form a strong oligarchic rule. At times law and order were established brutally and a new type of *caudillo* emerged. *Caudillo* wanted national development along with order, scientific and economic progress.

The region saw emergence of nationalist propaganda and populism in early 20th century. Examples of this kind of nationalism are regimes of populist leaders like Juan Domingo Perón of Argentina and Getúlio Vargas of Brazil. Latin America saw a rash of revolutions and military coups after the economic crisis of 1929.

Role of the Church: The Church played an important role in Latin America. In the first few decades after colonization, many attempts were made to convert Amerindians. Missionaries from the Franciscan, Dominican and Augustinian orders came to work in Spain's colonies.

Along with the military and landed interests, the Church also played a major role in the politics of Latin America. The role of the Church started changing when it was one of the key sectors of the Spanish and Portuguese traditional societies. The subscription to liberation theology was a major change. Emphasizing that the Church should actively take a stance against repression and violence, liberation theology advocated equality of all believers with a minimal involvement of priests. However, many did not follow this doctrine believing that it meant the loss of the traditional authority and erosion of hierarchical power.

Military: The oligarchic power structure covered the business, middle and labour sectors in the post-1930 period. There was an expansion in the size of the middle sector and skilled workers and labourers were differentiated from the agrarian class. However, the hierarchical pyramidal structure remained intact and the two-class social structure was maintained.

The military came into being during the wars of independence. It became the most important groups after independence. The military became active in politics. It was realized that military officers should not only be taught warfare skills, but also political matters. The military was required to help solve national problems

including socio-economic reforms. This led to what is called "bureaucratic authoritarianism" or the rule of the military on a long-term basis. Thus, the governments in the region were quite frequently the coalitions of military and civilian factions. Military coups, military leaders being elected as presidents and the say of the military in non-military matters became an important aspect of the politics in Latin America. The military has become one of the traditional pillars of Latin American society.

CULTURAL LEGACY

Historically, the political culture in Latin American society has been elitist hierarchical, authoritarian, corporatist and patrimonialist, which stem from the Iberian tradition of nobility of the medieval ages. The political thought in Spain was that the society should be governed by elite and doubted the capacity of the masses to form a successful government. In the 19th century, a new set of liberal ideas such as egalitarian, republican, secular and rationalist were incorporated in laws and constitutions even as the structures of landownership and authority remained intact.

Positivism: Positivism influenced most of Latin America in the second half of the 19th century. Mainly the elite and the rising middle class believed positive ideology was based on scientific thought and a move towards progress and development. For instance, they gave importance to construction of roads and railways. The elite wanted to transform their cities into replicas of European cities. They saw industrialization as the key factor in advancement and focused on material growth.

Under the rule of Porfirio Díaz in Mexico (1876-1911), positivism was almost considered an official doctrine. Some of his ministers were called *científicos* and provided scientific solutions to the problems. To meet the demand of industrialization and modernization, the nations in the region started exporting which resulted in deepening dependency. Each nation depended on producing one or more exports to earn enough to import modern technology. Argentina produced beef and wheat, Brazil produced coffee, Chile produced nitrates and copper and Bolivia produced tin. Since progress led to inequitable distribution structures, it resulted in further impoverishment for the masses in the region.

Education: Education in Latin America was also based on non-egalitarian principles. Education was private and reserved only for the elite class. It was held that there was no need for educating the masses. Education was infused with Catholic and Thomistic

4 / NEERAJ : STATE AND SOCIETY IN LATIN AMERICA

premises. It was based on memorization, deductive and had no sense of science, empiricism or observation.

IDEAS AND PERSONALITIES

Independence Movements: The restrictions on trade placed by the Spanish Crown along with a rigid administrative structure led to the general discontent in Spanish colonies in Latin America. This set the stage for the wars of liberation of the Spanish colonies from 1810. However, the immediate cause of the wars in Latin America was Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Spain and the placement of Joseph Bonaparte on the throne. The Spanish colonists did not accept a French King as a legitimate ruler.

The Wars of Independence in the region took place between 1810 and 1825. The first phase of this war from 1810 to 1815 was not very successful because of inexperience and idealism. The second phase of the war from 1815 to 1825 was military in nature and it ended in victory.

Miguel Hidalgo: Miguel Hidalgo, a sixty-year old *Criollo* priest and intellectual, fought for the rights of the indigenous and *mestizo* population and the return of lands taken from the indigenous peoples. He dismissed popular notions concerning race. In December 1810, he organized an uprising in Mexico City – the administrative centre of New Spain, which extended from Panama in the south to the territories of California, New Mexico and Texas towards the north. When he learned that the Spanish authorities were going to preempt his move by sending forces against him, Hidalgo and his followers marched northwest calling the Indian and *mestizo* followers to action. They had their farm tools as weapons. The militia of San Miguel also joined Hidalgo's army. The army met with resistance in northwest, but they moved on taking one town after another till they reached Guadalajara. Hidalgo set up a small government at Guadalajara and started training his army. Eventually he was captured by the enemy camp. He was tried by the Inquisition, defrocked and executed on 31 July 1811 by firing squad at Dolores. Between 200 thousand and 500 thousand people were killed in the uprising to 1816.

Simon Bolivar: Simon Bolivar, part of *creme de la creme* of Venezuela's elite, was one of the leaders of the Wars of Independence in Latin America. His career as a public servant on behalf of freedom and independence started when he led a diplomatic mission to London. Bolivar suffered some setback in his career when he lost the Puerto Cabello to the Royalists during the Venezuelan First Republic in the first phase of the

Wars of Independence. He escaped to New Granada (present Colombia) and reunited his forces there.

Bolivar returned to Venezuela and declared a war against the authority of Spain by 1813. He set up the Venezuelan Second Republic with himself as its head from Caracas. It collapsed in a few months because he did not get the support of the non-whites, who were loyal to the king. When the Spanish king regained the throne from the French by 1814, Bolivar realized that his revolutionary ideas had to appeal to the *Creoles* as most of them be divided between independence and loyalty to their king. On this basis, he gave his republican ideals a conservative approach.

During 1815-25, to make progress towards independence and electoral democracy, Bolivar harnessed international support and his own continental vision into a winning strategy. Believing that South America had to follow its own model of independence and governance, Bolivar along with José de San Martín, decided to fight for independence.

In 1817, Bolívar returned to Venezuela. Beginning from the west, he took the strategic town of Angostura. He strengthened his ethnic base and provided incentives to the indigenous peoples and the black slaves. He also gained the assistance of the *llaneros*, who had been conducting a guerrilla war against the royalists. His victory at Boyacá was one of his main achievements which enabled him to occupy Bogotá by 1819. This led to liberation of New Granada. The independence of all the provinces of the viceroyalty was declared in December 1819 and Gran Colombia including present-day Venezuela, Colombia, Panama and Ecuador was created. Bolívar became the president of Gran Colombia.

Venezuela was completely free from Spanish rule in June 1821 when Bolívar won the battle of Carabobo and Caracas fell a few days later. After that, Bolívar conquered the province of Quito in the south. Bolívar and José de San Martín met at the city of Guayaquil on July 27, 1822. At that time, San Martín was struggling with his campaign in Peru and his control in Chile was uncertain. After their secret discussions, San Martín left South America altogether and went to Europe.

Bolivar wanted to form a larger union including Chile, Bolivia and Peru. However, it became a daunting task because of deep divisions between Venezuelans and Colombians and the differences between centralists and federalists. In 1825, he tried to overcome these problems by declaring a dictatorship but he lost his prestige. Bolivar died in 1830.