

Latin American military dictator. In the wake of the Latin American independence movement in the early 19th century, politically unstable conditions and the long experience of armed conflict led to the emergence in many of the new countries of strongmen who were often charismatic and whose hold on power depended on control over armed followers, patronage, and vigilance. Because their power was based on violence and personal relations, the legitimacy of the caudillos' rule was always in doubt, and few could withstand the challenges of new leaders who emerged among their own followers and wealthy patrons. *See also* machismo; personalismo.

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