

The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic: A Comprehensive Analysis



The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945 (American encounters/global interactions)

by Thomas J. Gradel

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The Good Neighbor Policy, a cornerstone of United States foreign policy towards Latin America during the 1930s and 1940s, aimed to foster improved relations and promote cooperation between the United States and its southern neighbors. However, the policy's implementation in the Dominican Republic under the authoritarian rule of Rafael Trujillo revealed its limitations and complexities.

Historical Context

In the early 20th century, the Dominican Republic faced a turbulent political landscape marked by military coups, economic instability, and U.S.

intervention. In 1930, Rafael Trujillo emerged as the nation's leader, seizing power through a military coup and establishing a dictatorial regime that would last for over three decades.

The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime

The Good Neighbor Policy, implemented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933, signaled a shift in U.S. foreign policy towards Latin America. It aimed to abandon the previous policy of military intervention and instead foster cooperation and mutual respect.

Initially, the United States recognized Trujillo's government and maintained diplomatic relations. However, as the extent of Trujillo's repressive rule and human rights violations became evident, the U.S. government began to reassess its support.

Key Events and Tensions

Several key events strained relations between the United States and the Trujillo regime:

- **The Parsley Massacre (1937):** Trujillo's regime ordered the massacre of thousands of Haitian migrant workers, sparking outrage in the international community.
- **The Murder of the Mirabal Sisters (1960):** The assassination of three anti-Trujillo activists by the regime further damaged the United States' view of Trujillo's government.

Despite these events, the United States continued to provide economic and military aid to the Dominican Republic, albeit with increasing reluctance.

Consequences and Legacy

The Good Neighbor Policy's application in the Dominican Republic had mixed consequences:

- **Short-Term Impact:** The policy initially led to improved diplomatic relations between the United States and the Dominican Republic, contributing to economic stability.
- **Long-Term Impact:** However, the policy's failure to effectively address Trujillo's human rights abuses and authoritarian rule ultimately undermined its credibility and contributed to the Dominican Republic's ongoing legacy of political instability.

The Good Neighbor Policy's implementation in the Dominican Republic under the Trujillo regime was a complex and challenging chapter in U.S.-Latin American relations. While the policy aimed to promote cooperation and mutual respect, it struggled to effectively address the human rights violations and authoritarianism that pervaded Trujillo's rule.

The experience of the Good Neighbor Policy in the Dominican Republic highlights the tension between the United States' desire for stability and its commitment to human rights and democracy. It also serves as a reminder of the ongoing challenges and complexities of foreign policy in the region.



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