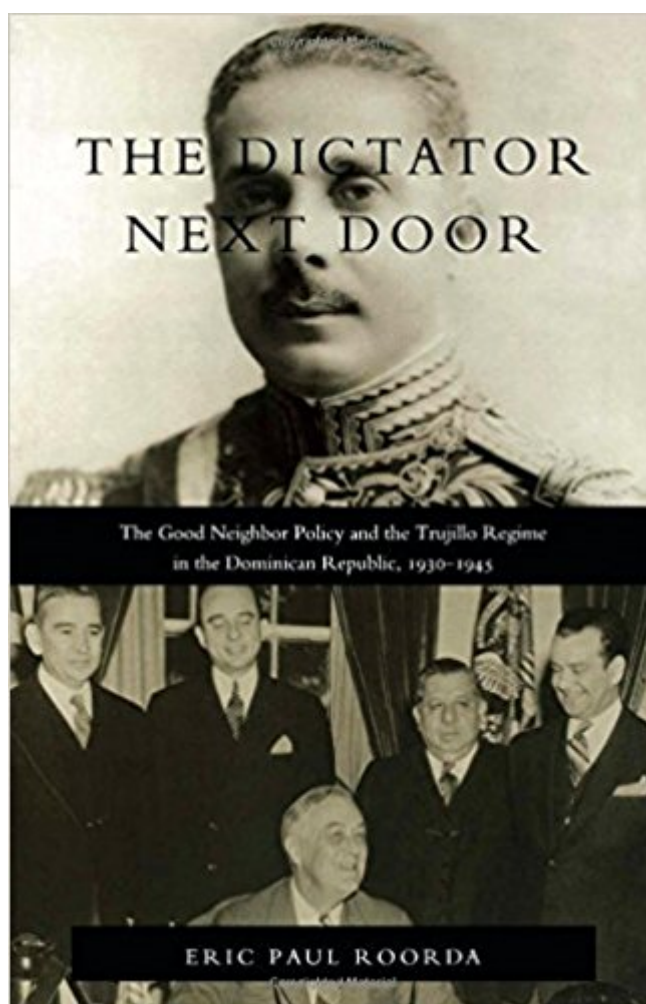


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# The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy And The Trujillo Regime In The Dominican Republic, 1930-1945 (American Encounters/Global Interactions)





## Synopsis

The question of how U.S. foreign policy should manage relations with autocratic governments, particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America, has always been difficult and complex. In *The Dictator Next Door* Eric Paul Roorda focuses on the relations between the U.S. and the Dominican Republic following Rafael Trujillo's seizure of power in 1930. Examining the transition from the noninterventionist policies of the Hoover administration to Roosevelt's Good Neighbor policy, Roorda blends diplomatic history with analyses of domestic politics in both countries not only to explore the political limits of American hegemony but to provide an in-depth view of a crucial period in U.S. foreign relations. Although Trujillo's dictatorship was enabled by prior U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic, the brutality of his regime and the reliance on violence and vanity to sustain his rule was an untenable offense to many in the U.S. diplomatic community, as well as to certain legislators, journalists, and bankers. Many U.S. military officers and congressmen, however, were impressed by the civil order and extensive infrastructure the dictator established and comprised an increasingly powerful Dominican lobby. What emerges is a picture of Trujillo at the center of a crowded stage of international actors and a U.S. government that, despite events such as Trujillo's 1937 massacre of 12,000 Haitians, was determined to foster alliances with any government that would oppose its enemies as the world moved toward war. Using previously untapped records, privately held papers, and unpublished photographs, Roorda demonstrates how caution, confusion, and conflicting goals marked U.S. relations with Trujillo and set the tone for the ambivalent Cold War relations that prevailed until Trujillo's assassination in 1961. *The Dictator Next Door* will interest Latin Americanists, historians, political scientists, and specialists in international relations and diplomacy.

## Book Information

Series: American Encounters/Global Interactions

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Duke University Press Books; 9.1.1998 edition (October 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0822321238

ISBN-13: 978-0822321231

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #753,532 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #34 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West Indies > Dominican Republic #765 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > Caribbean & Latin American #1935 in Books > Textbooks > Social Sciences > Political Science > International Relations

## Customer Reviews

In the 1930s, under the administrations of Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, the United States government adopted a stance toward countries in the Western hemisphere that it called, optimistically, the "Good Neighbor policy." Meant to encourage the principle of self-determination and to cultivate respect for national sovereignty in a time of European imperial expansion, the policy was immediately put to the test by the rise of the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, who held onto power through a stunning campaign of terror against his citizens and those of neighboring Haiti. While Trujillo massacred his enemies real and imagined, the American government watched patiently--a failure to intervene that, writes historian Eric Paul Roorda, "demonstrated to a generation of Latin American dictators that they were free to run their countries however they wished, so long as they maintained common enemies with the United States: first the fascists, then the communists." Trujillo made sure to keep favor in Washington by employing a powerful lobby made up of retired American military officers and industrialists. The strategy worked for decades, until Trujillo's excesses became too much to excuse. Then, Roorda writes, presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy gave aid to Trujillo's enemies, who eventually succeeded in assassinating the dictator in 1961. This well-stated, cautionary tale of foreign policy gone awry has implications for our time, and it makes for fascinating reading. --Gregory McNamee

"The Dictator Next Door is a powerfully argued, full-blown diplomatic history that sheds much useful light on a crucial period of United States foreign relations. There are many fine studies of the Good Neighbor Policy, but none comes close to Roorda's densely textured knowledge of U.S.-Dominican relations." • Lars Schoultz, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill "An excellent piece of research on a topic that is both important and neglected. Roorda's determination to look at this bilateral relationship as the product of a multiplicity of actors is indeed unique." —Bruce Calder, University of Illinois at Chicago "The Dictator Next Door . . . is a well-told story of relations between the United States and the Dominican Republic during the 1930s and 1940s. Perhaps the most important contribution of Roorda's work is his convincing depiction of the buildup of Rafael

Trujillo's empire using the good neighbor policy to his advantage. (Daniela Spenser Hispanic American Historical Review) "[A] definitive account of United States policies toward the Dominican Republic during the first half of Rafael Trujillo's odious regime. . . . [An] excellent study. (Stephen G. Rabe The Journal of American History) "For an excellent view of the Good Neighbor Policy in action and the role of the military in basic foreign relations, this book is required reading. (Robert Freeman Smith Military History) "Roorda's book is a substantial contribution not only to our understanding of the dynamics of U.S.-Latin American relations during the Good Neighbor era but to an emerging international history that documents the capacity of small states on the peripheries of world power to influence the policies of superpowers at the center of the international system. (Michael Grow American Historical Review)" An essential history of American presidents Herbert Hoover and FDR's failed 'Good Neighbor Policy' in Latin America detailing how Trujillo managed to maintain support in Washington by siding against first the Fascists and later the Communists, despite the blatant horrors of his regime." (The Rough Guide to the Dominican Republic 2014-01-01)

I'm torn about giving this book 2 stars. It's obviously well-researched by someone who's spent a lot of time thinking about the subject but it's not the story of Dictator Trujillo or the Dominican Republic or even a story at all -- there is no narrative. It's a book about policy written for policy wonks. It is not a coherent history, but rather an extensive thesis on how the different perceived goals of the military and state department interwoven with the personal biases of individuals create policy, using the Dominican Republic as a case study. It questions the perceived wisdom that propping up dictators and strong men in non-democratic nations at least create a framework of stability that benefits a country, if not the individuals within a country. Recommended as a sleep aid because it's the driest thing I've read in a year.

This book is very informative on the history of my beloved country. Mr. Roorda did extensive research regarding the history of the Dominican Republic which makes it essential to fully understand the reasons behind my uncle's way of governing. Americans still to this day need to better understand the way, the hispanic mind thinks, and the way we are! Once americans understand this, they will be better informed when they opiniate on latin american affairs. When you research the past before my uncle, it becomes quite clear the reason that when you read into the inaffective governments before him, nothing was accomplished. How many weak Ceo's in American

Corporations have been successful? My uncle built a country out of manure! clear and simple! Mr. Roorda has my compliments. It will provide a better understanding to Dominican history, for individuals who have a love of world history. Mr. Roorda states in the beginning of the book, that my uncle made it difficult for American Companies to do business in the Dominican Republic, of course! his main concern was for the best interest of his country, period! so, Mr. Roorda, my compliments. Sincerely and Respectfully, Danilo Lynen Trujillo

WOW! Great Product, Great Price, Great Vendor = Great DEAL! I'm impressed! Thanks!

WOW, informative. Good info

Eric Paul Roorda's book is a very interesting study in how well-intentioned U.S. policy backfired. Beginning with Hoover and continuing with FDR, the U.S. tried to be a "good neighbor" to Latin American nations. In other words, the U.S. ceased to intervene at the drop of a hat. In the case of the Dominican Republic, this new policy allowed a ruthless military dictator with fascist tendencies, Rafael Trujillo, to seize power. Despite warnings from those in the know, the U.S. held fast to its non-intervention policy and allowed Trujillo to hold power for years. The book documents all of this as well as Trujillo's well-organized and continual lobbying effort to gain the approval from U.S. officials that he craved. I had thought for a long time that we should stay out of the business of other nations, but this book certainly casts doubt on the wisdom of that approach. Highly recommended.

Eric Paul Roorda gives an insightful view in the often overlooked subject of u.s. diplomatic and military relations with latin american dictators, namely that of the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic. Through exhaustive research and excellent writing, Roorda gives a detailed account of how the dictatorship of trujillo took advantage of F.D.R's Good Neighbor Policy in order to cement complete social and political control upon the Dominican people. Roorda illustrated how the Good Neighbor Policy, in effect, gave tacit consent to the Trujillo regime. Another aspect of American diplomatic history that Roorda poignantly sheds light on, is the racist and prejudice attitudes of many of the American players in the game of foreign affairs. These prejudices gives the U.S. government a paternalistic view of the governments they deal with as well as the people from those nations. The Dictator Next Door is a must read for any student of Dominican history and for any reader interested in American foreign affairs under the Good Neighbor Policy.

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