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## Latin America and the Cold War

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In the last decades, there has been considerable growth in the number of studies using the Cold War conceptual framework to explain contemporary historical phenomena in Latin America. Building on seminal works such as *Espejos de la Guerra Fría* (Spenser, 2004), In From the Cold (Joseph; Spenser, 2008), The Last Colonial Massacre (Grandin, 2004), and *Guatemala y la Guerra Fría en América Latina* (Ferreira, 2010), the study of Latin America's Cold War has undergone a profound transformation, moving beyond traditional narratives of superpower proxy conflicts to reveal a far more complex historical landscape (Harmer, 2014; Marchesi, 2017; Pettinà, 2018). Despite the fact that most of the historiography on the subject has been written by non-Latin American scholars, research and centers in Latin America have gained increasing prominence. There is also a growing movement to value Latin American research traditions that predate the current historiographical wave. These earlier traditions often did not employ the "Cold War" category; instead, other ways of conceptualizing the period emerged, such as "historia reciente" or "historia del tiempo presente" studies, especially in the Southern Cone countries. The recent La Guerra Fría Latinoamericana y sus historiografías (Pettinà, 2023a) serves as a crucial milestone in reasserting the pivotal role of Latin American academia within the field.

The vitality of this field has been significantly boosted by increasingly critical dialogues between Global North Latin Americanists and Latin American scholars focused on the Cold War. This is evident in the historiographical contributions and debates involving figures such as Casals (2020), Joseph (2019, 2020), Taffet & Loureiro (2021), and Pettinà & Ióris (2023). This dialogue is grounded in both shared understandings of the Cold War's nature – as a Global Cold War experienced with its own particularities in all regions of the planet (Westad, 2007) – and in the recognition of the agency of Latin American actors. In this context, the use of the "Cold War" concept is not intended to "deprovincialize" a historiography that already exhibits analytical sophistication, but rather to enrich international debates by incorporating Latin American perspectives and experiences (Pettinà, 2023b, p. 17). For this recent historiography, within the post-1945 regional context, Latin America's long-standing struggles over land, class, state authority, and U.S. hegemony intersected with Cold War ideological frameworks (Joseph; Grandin, 2010; Booth, 2021). As Marcelo Casals observes, "local elites strategically sought the favor of the superpowers, and local political conflicts became imbued with the ideological and normative languages of both projects of modernity" (2023, p. 27).

This fresh perspective has enabled new research to delve into emerging themes and areas like culture (Calandra; Franco, 2012; Iber, 2015), sex and gender (Manzano, 2015; Cowan, 2016; Valobra; Yusta, 2017; Harmer, 2020), race (Chaves, 2019; Cancelli; Mesquita; Chaves, 2023), economy and development (Ioris, 2014; Loureiro, 2020; Thornton, 2021; de Oliveira, 2022; Fajardo Hernández, 2022; Rodríguez-Jiménez; Gómez-Escalonilla; Calandra, 2023), relations with the Third World (Field Jr; Krepp; Pettinà, 2020; Alburquerque, 2020; Loureiro, 2021; Parrott; Lawrence, 2022), relations with Eastern actors (Manke; Březinová; Blecha, 2017; Gradskova, 2022; Moreli; Caterina, 2024), and interactions among Latin American actors and nations that transcended the U.S.-centered Cold War framework in the region (Keller, 2015; Harmer, 2019; Rostica, 2023; Véliz Estrada, forthcoming).

This revitalization was made possible by moving beyond the primacy of North American archives, now relying instead on recently opened archives and previously unexamined documentation from the Soviet Union (Caterina, 2019; Paranzino, 2024; Yordanov, 2024), Third World countries such as Yugoslavia (Calori, 2023; Cosovschi, 2024), and India (Prasad, 2024).

In dialogue with these new approaches, this special issue brings together cutting-edge research that challenges conventional interpretations and reconfigures our understanding of how the Cold War was experienced, shaped, and contested across the region. Through meticulous archival research and innovative methodologies, the contributors demonstrate that Latin America was not merely a stage for the competition between the two superpowers but rather a dynamic space where local actors developed creative strategies to navigate, resist, and exploit the global ideological divide. At the heart of this collection lies a radical rethinking of agency in Cold War history. Collectively, the articles dismantle the persistent notion of Latin American passivity. Instead, they reveal how governmental actors, institutions, revolutionary movements, intellectuals, and conservative sectors actively engaged with – and often manipulated – Cold War dynamics to pursue their own political and economic agendas.

The initiative to organize this dossier emerged from concerns shared within our research group<sup>1</sup>, as well as from exchanges with other academic centers in Brazil and elsewhere, driven by the pressing need to deepen this historiographical revision and expand the reach of research produced *in* and *about* the region. The wide dissemination of the call for papers drew submissions from authors in countries such as Brazil, Mexico, the United States, India, Germany, and France, attesting to the growing interest and recent dynamism of the field.

Four articles by authors at different stages of their academic careers were selected for this dossier. This issue also features a special article by Professor Anna Grimaldi (University of Leeds), which offers fundamental methodological reflections for anyone teaching or researching the Cold War in the hemisphere. It also includes interviews with two leading voices in the field, Professors Tanya Harmer (London School of Economics) and James Hershberg (George Washington University). Both are renowned scholars with critical perspectives and widely cited publications.

Tanya Harmer's interview, conducted by Alessandra Beber Castilho and Natali Francine Cinelli Moreira, shows us the need for a more nuanced examination of the Latin American experience during the Cold War – not as an isolated regional phenomenon, but as an integral part of a broader global history, as proposed by Field, Krepp, and Pettinà (2020). Acknowledging the peculiarities of Latin America's Cold War, particularly through a critical reflection on its geographical proximity to the United States and the agency of Latin American actors in this turbulent relationship, Harmer draws attention to the exchanges, networks, and dialogues established between Latin America – including right-wing actors – and other parts of the world. Her attentiveness to personal and private

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> We refer to the Cold War Research Group, which is part of the Laboratory for Studies on Brazil and the World System (LabMundi, IRI/FFLCH– University of São Paulo). Further information about the group and its work agenda can be found. Available at: <a href="https://labmundi.fflch.usp.br/nucleo-de-pesquisa-guerra-fria">https://labmundi.fflch.usp.br/nucleo-de-pesquisa-guerra-fria</a>.

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experiences during the ideological conflict encourages readers not only to analyze Latin America's Cold War through the lenses of gender, race, and class, but also to bring these pressing concerns into a contemporary – and absolutely necessary – dialogue between academia and civil society. Finally, by sharing her experience with archival research in multiple countries, along with insights into the past, present, and future of this field, Harmer's interview offers invaluable lessons for students and early-career researchers interested in understanding how Latin America experienced – and continues to grapple with – the complexities of the Cold War.

James Hershberg, interviewed by Gianfranco Caterina, offers an insightful perspective on the historiography of Latin America's Cold War. In tandem with Tanya Harmer's thoughts, Hershberg emphasizes the need to decentralize studies of the regional Cold War, moving beyond traditional U.S.-centric approaches and promoting more balanced interpretations of Latin American agency to grasp the complex interplay of domestic, regional, and international forces. He offers intriguing reflections on Mao Zedong's interactions with Latin American communists along with the under-examined impact of the Sino-Soviet split on Brazilian politics during the early 1960s, especially on the left-wing actors. When discussing new research agendas, he briefly addresses some of the blind spots in the field and advocates a more in-depth exploration of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc's involvement in Latin America through the underutilized archives of Eastern Europe, which, as he notes, "have barely been tapped". With regards to the evolution of Cold War studies, Herschberg argues that incorporating new perspectives, such as those relating to gender, race, and social movements, has enriched the field, while also affirming the continued relevance of traditional political, diplomatic, and military analysis.

Beyond the historiographical reflections and the analysis provided in the interviews, the impact of the Cold War also reverberates in the ways we teach and learn about it. This issue's special article, **Archives, Affects and Presence**, written by Anna Grimaldi, explores the possibilities of using the history of Cold War Latin America as a pedagogical tool to reimagine the politics of solidarity, both during that period and today. Drawing on Paulo Freire's methodology, Grimaldi's project, Thinking Inside the Box: 1973, introduces a new way of using archives and memories in the classroom. This approach enables fresh interpretations of the Cold War, particularly of political resistance in Latin America at that time, as seen through the eyes of the students. The experiment invites us to rethink the teaching of History beyond the traditional structure of the university. Deeply engaging with Tanya Harmer's interview, Anna Grimaldi's article adds a perspective on the nature of memory, sources, and historical writing, taking part in studies that emphasize the importance of social and cultural contexts in the interpretation of historical events. The article also calls for a more critical and reflective approach to archival research on the Cold War, aligning itself with the broader historiographical renewal that seeks new methodologies and challenges the objectivity of sources.

Turning the focus to the concrete diplomatic and economic dynamics of the era, in ¿Un punto de inflexión en las relaciones argentino-soviéticas? La participación Argentina en la Conferencia Económica de Moscú de 1952 en el marco de la Guerra Fría latinoamericana,

authors Víctor Manuel Lafuente and Mirko Petersen investigate Argentina's participation in the 1952 Moscow Economic Conference (MEC), aiming to determine whether the event marked a turning point in political and trade relations between Argentina and the Soviet Union. Drawing on archival sources from Argentina and other countries, the article examines Argentina's motivations and assesses the impact of the conference on bilateral relations. This piece makes a particularly relevant contribution by shedding light on an event that, as the authors underline, has been largely overlooked by historiography. In doing so, the study not only fills a gap concerning Argentina's foreign policy initiatives during a period of increasing bipolarity but also enhances the broader understanding of Soviet relations with the Global South in the 1950s (Vacs, 1984; Brun; Hersh, 1990; Sewell, 2008; Rupprecht, 2011). The article reveals fissures within the Argentine bureaucracy, showing diverging stances toward the USSR and prompting reflection on Soviet motivations. It offers a significant contribution to the debate on Latin American autonomy and the multifaceted nature of the Cold War in the region.

If the previous study illuminates the complex bilateral relations in the Cold War context, the analysis of multilateral dynamics also proves crucial. Michelle D. Paranzino's article, The Organization of American States and the Non-Aligned Movement in the Cold War, examines the "interlinked trajectories" of these two institutions. Her central hypothesis is that "increased disillusionment with US dominance of the OAS was one of the factors driving the growth of Latin American membership in the NAM". While acknowledging other factors for Latin American interest in non-alignment, Paranzino argues that the "politicization of the OAS to achieve US foreign policy objectives in Latin America" is a less-studied but significant influence on the NAM's development and Latin American attraction to it. The article provides a nuanced analysis of how Latin American states pragmatically navigated multiple global alignments. For Cuba, affiliation with the NAM was vital to its survival and legitimacy, despite contradictions like its alliance with the Soviet Union - an issue that caused tension with NAM members such as Yugoslavia. For other regimes, including Argentina and Panama, the NAM served as a strategic platform. Paranzino also explores how the Soviet Union sought to leverage Latin American discontent with U.S. policy, as in its support for Argentina during the Malvinas conflict. Despite internal divisions and ideological rifts - evident, for example, in the failure of the New International Economic Order - the NAM remained a valuable arena for smaller states to project autonomy and contest U.S. hegemony. Paranzino's interpretation highlights how Latin American governments, including both leftist and anti-communist regimes, strategically leveraged multiple alignments with both the West and the Third World.

In Política de transferência de armas, promoção comercial e relações brasileiro-canadenses (1974-1976): análise de um processo de tomada de decisão, Carlos Federico Domínguez Avila explores Brazilian-Canadian relations through the lens of the Cold War. Drawing on archival sources, Domínguez Avila investigates Brazil's attempt to transfer EE-11 Urutu armored vehicles to Canada during the period of *détente*. By looking into newly declassified Brazilian diplomatic sources, the study addresses the complexities of arms transfer policy, international security decision-

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making processes, and the Brazil–Canada bilateral relationship. The article contributes to the debate on the global nature of the Cold War by analyzing how its dynamics shaped policies and commercial relations, even among countries not directly involved in the bipolar conflict. It deepens the analysis of Brazil's international relations during the *détente* by reconstructing the Brazilian decision-making process and highlighting the role of multiple actors. Avila also discusses how, despite initial mutual interest, the transfer did not materialize due to competition and Brazilian hesitation, revealing the limits of national autonomy.

Finally, El impacto de la Revolución Sandinista en la Guerra Fría Interamericana, by Gerardo Sánchez Nateras and Mateo Jarquín, offers a significant historiographical intervention. Instead of examining the Cold War's influence on Central America, the authors explore how the Sandinista Revolution shaped the Cold War and the inter-American system. This contribution aligns with recent scholarly efforts to emphasize Latin American agency and the importance of the Global South, advancing the call made by Tanya Harmer and Eline van Ommen (2021) to "internationalize the Nicaraguan Revolution." The authors, notable contributors to the recent reassessment of the Nicaraguan process (Nateras, 2022; Jarquín, 2024; Ommen, 2024), argue that the revolution was a hub and catalyst for major political and social transformations in the 1980s, showing the outsized influence of actors often considered marginal in global power structures. Ultimately, Jarquín and Sánchez Nateras argue that the Sandinista victory intensified existing tensions within the inter-American system, illustrating both the constraints of U.S. power and the assertion of Latin American diplomatic active force in shaping the trajectory of the Cold War.

As we can see, the articles in this dossier collectively demonstrate that the Cold War in Latin America is a complex, multi-layered phenomenon shaped by local histories, economic aspirations, ideological contestations, social movements, and cultural exchanges. They highlight how Latin American actors actively engaged with, resisted, appropriated, and reshaped Cold War logics according to their particular contexts and objectives. Moreover, they foreground the deep entanglement between the Cold War and development, modernization, and revolution, revealing how these dynamics converged to produce new political possibilities and conflicts across the region. The dossier's focus on less-studied subjects fills critical gaps in the literature and challenges hegemonic historiographies that have long marginalized these experiences.

Importantly, these articles not only enrich our historical understanding but also resonate with contemporary political debates about memory, justice, and sovereignty in Latin America. The legacy of the Cold War in the region, such as ideological struggles, political intervention, and economic paradigms, continues to shape regional politics and international alignments. Through rigorous and critical historiography, this special issue re-examines these legacies and invites scholars, policymakers, and the broader public to reflect on the enduring consequences of the Cold War and the possibilities of reimagining Latin America's place in the global order. In doing so, it reaffirms the relevance of historical inquiry for contemporary challenges and the ongoing struggle for social and political transformation in the Americas.

Finally, this issue exemplifies the vitality and potential of Latin American Cold War studies as a field that bridges national and global perspectives, transcends disciplinary boundaries, and fosters collaborative, multilingual, and transnational research practices. It reinforces the importance of centering Latin American voices and experiences in rewriting Cold War history, recognizing them as active agents in shaping a complex and contested past.

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