

Applying Transnational Perspectives in Latin American Studies

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This article advocates incorporating transnational perspectives in Latin American Studies research. It suggests that studying Latin American dynamics over the long run means considering the impact of transnational forces and processes that since political independence have linked Latin American societies beyond their particularity. Recognizing the transnational dimensions of their historical development, we may avoid falling into the error of assuming the existence of a fixed correlation between territorial residence, citizenship, and national identities, as if these dimensions of social life always converged and merged necessarily into one another. That is, in addition to approaching this multistate region within a country-by-country optic and from a comparative lens or in terms of international relations, the text claims that we should also address it from a transnational perspective. Only then would analysis fully account for the articulation of local and national dynamics with international and global dynamics. The article illustrates the relevance of this approach by identifying several areas of specific research where a long-term transnational angle of analysis is brought into focus.

Keywords: transnational perspectives, comparative-historical sociology, methodological nationalism, collective identities, long-term analyses

Este artículo aboga por la incorporación de perspectivas transnacionales en investigaciones en Estudios Latinoamericanos. Sugiere que estudiar las dinámicas latinoamericanas a largo plazo significa considerar el impacto de fuerzas y procesos transnacionales que, desde la independencia política, han vinculado a las sociedades latinoamericanas más allá de su particularidad. Si reconocemos las dimensiones transnacionales de su desarrollo histórico, podemos evitar caer en el error de suponer la existencia de una correlación fija entre la residencia territorial, la ciudadanía y las identidades nacionales, como si estas dimensiones de la vida social siempre convergieran y se fundieran necesariamente unas con otras. Es decir, además de abordar esta región multiestatal desde una óptica de país por país y desde una lente comparativa o en términos de las relaciones internacionales, también debemos tratarla desde una perspectiva transnacional. Solo entonces el análisis dará plena cuenta de la articulación de las dinámicas locales y nacionales con las dinámicas internacionales y globales. El artículo ilustra la relevancia de este enfoque mediante la identificación de varias áreas de investigación específicas en las que se destaca un ángulo de análisis transnacional de largo plazo.

Palabras claves: perspectivas transnacionales, sociología histórico-comparativa, nacionalismo metodológico, identidades colectivas, análisis de largo plazo

For a century now, path-breaking works in history and sociology have emphasized the relevance of long-term analyses for considering the interplay of social structure, culture and social change, and the role of human agency in the process. Among many others, contributions like those of Lucien Febvre (1930), Norbert Elias ([c.1939] 1978), Michel Foucault (1979), Philippe Ariès (1982), Reinhart Koselleck (2009, 1985), Pierre Rosanvallon (2003), Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt (2007), and Steinmetz, Freedman, and Fernández-Sebastián (2017) have fully established awareness of the importance of studying societies' dynamics of continuity and change over the long historical span. In this article, I suggest that studying Latin America over the long run implies recognizing necessarily various transnational dimensions pervading the region.

A transnational perspective allows us to overcome both historicist methodologies and certain social science methodologies that have tended to focus primarily on nation-states as units of analysis. I rather suggest that by recognizing the transnational dimensions of Latin American historical development, we may avoid falling into the error of assuming the existence of a fixed correlation between: (a) territorial residence, (b) the principle of political membership or citizenship, and (c) national identities, as if these three autonomous dimensions of social life always converged and merged necessarily into one another.

A transnational perspective complements national, comparative, and international relations approaches by tracing how Latin American societies or sectors thereof impacted one another in multiple ways. Among others, a transnational perspective may contribute to: the historical and sociological study of frontier areas; contacts and networks between individuals and sectors of different countries, be they activists, members of the armed forces, criminals, or others; the role and impact of political exiles, migrants, travelers, and sojourners who come and go across state borders; the study of cultural and commercial exchanges, national diasporas, and the transfer of ideas and ideologies; and the study of transnational social movements interacting betwixt and between various states, civil societies, and international actors.

This article is part of a transnational turn that has gathered momentum in recent years, and it recognizes and builds upon many important contributions to this line of analysis. Although the idea of a regional “community” of nations has long existed and informed studies, such as the work of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto or Tulio Halperin Donghi in the 1960s–70s, Alan Rouquié in the 1980s and Peter Smith's *Talons of the Eagle* in the 1990s, or more recently, Fernando Calderón and Manuel Castells's *The New Latin America*, the dominant approach—somehow in tandem with the consolidation of nation-states in the region—remained that of country analysis and expertise, as reflected in popular introductory textbooks reprinted numerous times in the USA.

By the twenty-first century, however, studies adopting explicit transnational perspectives have burgeoned. Among them, one finds studies about political and intellectual movements such as the Central American Unionists or the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA), e.g., Marta Casaús Arzú and Teresa García Giráldez's *Las redes intelectuales centroamericanas* (2005), Claudio Maíz and Álvaro Fernández Bravo's *Episodios en la formación de redes culturales en América Latina* (2009), Mark Overmyer-Velázquez and Enrique Sepúlveda III's *Global Latin(o) Americanos* (2018), or Geneviève Dorais's *Journey to Indo-America* (2021). Also, there are works studying elite and rank-and-file transnational webs of contact and relocation, some of them since the nineteenth century, such as, Mario Sznajder and Luis Roniger's *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* (2009), Michael Goebel's *Overlapping Geographies of Belonging* (2013), Ori Preuss's *Bridging the Island* (2011) and *Transnational South America* (2016), Edward Blumenthal's *Exile and Nation-State Formation in Argentina and Chile, 1810–1862* (2019), and Ricardo Melgar Bao's *Redes e imaginario del exilio en México y América Latina, 1934–1940* (2021).

Likewise, geopolitical studies have contributed greatly to the field. Worth mentioning are Michel Gobat's work on the formative reactions to imperialism (2013, 2018), Ernesto Bohoslavsky and Magdalena Broquetas's work on anticommunism in Argentina and Uruguay (2017), Kristina Piker and Julieta Rostica's *Confrontación de imaginarios* (2021), and Vanni Pettinà's *Historia mínima de la Guerra Fría en América Latina* (2018) on Cold War anticommunism, and studies on the repressive transnational networks and the countervailing networks of solidarity, such as Jessica Stites Mor's *Human Rights and Transnational Solidarity in Cold War Latin America* (2013) and *South-South Solidarity and the Latin American Left* (2022), and Francesca Lessa's *The Condor Trials* (2022). In a long-term perspective, Roniger's *Transnational Perspectives on Latin America* (2022) includes transnational analyses of historical wars and conspiracy theories, of Chavismo's *Nuestramérica* rhetoric and practice, and of ethnic diasporas. Equally comprehensive are: Eliezer Ben-Rafael et al. *Transnationalism. Diasporas and the Advent of a New (Dis)order* (2009) and a book edited by Max Friedman and Núria Vilanova, *Transnational Humans and Transnationalisms in the Humanities* (forthcoming, 2025).

Pablo Palomino's *The Invention of Latin American Music* (2020) has traced how music has been a driver of an identifiable transnational cultural identity, from its origins in the nineteenth century to a height by the 1930s. Also worth mentioning are Javier Fernández-Sebastián's "Iberconceptos" (2017), part of a broader project of transnational conceptual history in the Iberian and Ibero-American context. Stephanie Gänger's *A Singular Remedy* (2020) and Irina Podgorny's contributions (2013, 2022) have offered transnational perspectives on the history of science and the transnational circulation of knowledge in the Americas. There are also studies developing readings of specific countries and areas in a transnational key, among them Roniger's *Transnational Politics*

in *Central America* (2011) and Pedro Cameselle-Pesce and Debbie Sharnak's *Uruguay in Transnational Perspective* (2023). Finally, we should mention studies on transnational infrastructure such as Lila Caimari's "News from around the World" (2016) on the impact of the telegraph. Some of these contributions inform the analyses below.

Caveat: The Concept of Latin America Can Easily Be Deconstructed...

Asserting the existence of idiosyncratic regions is open to controversy and can be attacked both from the perspective of the diversity of constitutive nations and states and from the perspective of global trends that impact national and local spheres. Due to the constructed conceptual character of regions, attempts to attribute an essential nature to them involve a dangerous trap. Furthermore, growing processes of global interdependence question the very idea of regions with durable borders and stable sociodemographic configurations. Among these processes, the heterogeneous impact of multiculturalism stands out, whose conceptualization constantly has changed amidst the ebbs and flows of international migration, the transfer of ideas, the proliferation of diasporas, and the crystallization of increasingly complex identities and commitments, as well as changing international alliances. On these grounds, the concept of Latin America is open to deconstruction (Domingues 2009; Sznjader, Roniger, and Forment 2013).

"Latin America" has become a generic term used to refer to Brazil, Haiti, and the eighteen Spanish-speaking states of the Americas, being used by people living in those societies. However, we must remember that, with political independence, the self-referential term for the region was "the Americas" and soon, "Hispanic America" (*Hispanoamérica*) and "Luso-America," to distinguish them from the USA or Anglo-America. Luso-America calls attention to the cultural connection of Brazil, the headquarters of the global Portuguese Empire for a brief period in the early nineteenth century, with Portugal, the country of origin, once the two empires went their separate ways without engaging in war.

In their *Voyage aux régions équinoxiales du nouveau continent* (1816–26), Alexander von Humboldt and Aimé JA Bonpland used the term "Latin race" to refer to societies in those parts of the Western Hemisphere. In the mid-nineteenth century, when the region first witnessed US expansionism, a generation after the Monroe Doctrine, intellectuals, diplomats, activists, and other Western European elites coined the term "Latin America." It was then that a sense of solidarity was generated throughout the region after the US victory in the Mexican-American War of 1846–48, followed by the seizure of power in Nicaragua in 1856 by William Walker and his American filibusters. Walker's intention to expand his control throughout Central America then prompted a coalition of forces from Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and neighboring societies to push for a "national war" that was waged by transnational forces. Faced with the possibility of losing territory again, they

raised the principles of Bolivarianism, the idea preached by Simón Bolívar when proclaiming the equality of American states and the resistance to any territorial gain through war, concepts that repeatedly galvanized Latin American peoples. Among others standing out in their call for a comprehensive regional unification were Colombian José María Samper in 1859 and several Chilean intellectuals, among them, Benjamín Vicuña Mackenna, who in the 1860s tried to promote interest in a supranational, regional government, either federal or confederal (Rivera 2014).

In a detailed analysis of how Latin America was “invented,” historian Michel Gobat indicated how such events motivated Hispanic Americans to imagine their region as a connected geopolitical community. Fears of US expansionism led Central Americans to mobilize and South Americans to draw up plans for an “anti-American” alliance, while some imagined the creation of a confederation of states that would resist US expansionism anywhere in the continent. At the same time, diplomats and exiles living in Paris coined the term “Latin America” to represent their countries of origin in a discursive manner appropriate to the European environment and, in some cases, to represent them diplomatically among the intellectual and political circles of France and other European states. Also, of weight in favoring this term, France imagined itself being able to control parts of the region, particularly Mexico, which is why the suggested term acquired political resonance (Ardao 1980; Gobat 2013, 2018).

The term “Hispanic America,” although older, gained strength at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. After the Spanish-American War of 1898, some of the modernists resumed a spirit of Hispanic or Iberian rapprochement on which they based their rejection of US expansionism. As for Ibero-America, the term received the support of German Latin Americanists, leaving aside French *Latinidad*.

One can easily deconstruct the notion of Latin America as an idiosyncratic region by indicating the enormous differences that separate the component states from each other, both in terms of their demographic composition and their different ecological, institutional, and historical development. Scholars of Latin America emphasize time and again such variability in the region, highlighting the enormous distance that separates Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Brazilian areas from the Indo-American regions that run through the Andes from south to north; from the Euro-American complex of much of the Southern Cone; and from mestizo America in Mexico, parts of Central America, and Venezuela. Similarly, from an institutional perspective, the area has experienced a multiplicity of political and institutional events in a spectrum that varies enormously as one goes, for example, from Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia to Brazil, Chile, Argentina, or Mexico, Colombia, and Central America. Consequently, if it did not sound so strange, we would use the term in the plural, referring to the “Latin Americas.”

Another line of criticism has been to show the term's malleability. Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo (2018) has discussed how Latin America has become a term "used and abused" by liberal Jacobins and reactionary Catholics, by monarchists and republicans, by populists, Marxists, and conservatives. Moreover, he emphasized the racist overtones that it acquired when used by white supremacist elites implementing policies of exclusion. Similarly, considering the multiple ways in which global migration shaped the various societies (Moya 2018) has also added social complexity to the region's demographic diversity, which has been under constant transformation since colonial times (Mörner 1967, 53–73).

Moreover, in addition to the twenty states usually included, Latin America lends itself to encompassing other territories: Puerto Rico, the French-speaking territories of Canada (mainly Quebec and parts of New Brunswick), parts of the US (mainly in the South, such as Louisiana, and in the large territory conquered—and its population annexed—in the Mexican-American War), and the French overseas departments in the Caribbean: Martinique, Guadeloupe, and French Guiana. The Latin American presence persisted in these territories in the names of people and places; in foods, customs and practices; and in historical records and personal memories. Later, waves of transnational migration primarily from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America recreated the meaning of being Latino and the boundaries of being "Latin American" in novel ways (Fusco 1995). Overall, one should recall that Latin Americans consider themselves Americans, and many oppose the arrogant use of the continent's name by just one of the thirty-four countries of the Western Hemisphere (Winn 1992, 1–32).

... And Yet, We Should Recognize Long-Term Transnational Impacts and Linkages in the Region

What justifies the persistent use of the aggregative term of "Latin America" are the many geopolitical, sociological, and cultural trends that—generated by human actors' agency, interactions, and networks—have shaped a contiguity of influences that have sometimes led to confrontations, but which, in general, have shaped a transnational scenario of connections, mutual contacts, visions, and initiatives.

The Napoleonic invasion into Spain reverberated in the assumption of autonomy in the Americas and produced the eventual independence of various states, prompting a frenzied competition to assert political sovereignty and at times changes of territorial jurisdiction. Since then, common ties continued to promote crossovers and reconnections, as the historiography of recent decades highlights (Guerra 1993; Palacios 2009; González Bernaldo de Quirós 2015; Breña 2023). The independence leaders of the beginning of the nineteenth century moved widely throughout the American territories.

José de San Martín became the “Protector of Perú,” in addition to liberating Chile after crossing from Cuyo, Argentina. Antonio José de Sucre, originally from New Granada, was head of state in Bolivia. The Honduran liberal Francisco Morazán governed the entire Central American Republic. Perhaps one of the most patent examples of how shifting were the malleable collective identities at the time is that of Guatemalan Antonio José de Irisarri, who became a Chilean diplomat and as such served in Buenos Aires, Central America, and Peru; and as a Guatemalan and Salvadoran diplomat, was stationed in Ecuador and Colombia, before moving to Curaçao and the United States.

Following the 1898 Spanish-American War, new calls for a pan-Latin American agenda were launched by early twentieth-century intellectuals such as José Enrique Rodó, Salvador Mendieta, Manuel Ugarte, and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre. Peruvian Haya de la Torre, for instance, was not just a prolific writer reaching audiences throughout the region but also the founder in 1924 of a cross-national party, the APRA, which followed an anticolonialist and anti-imperialist agenda dedicated to the political unification of Latin America.

The process of nation-state building took place in a transnational imbrication. In tandem with the construction of multiple sovereign states and their differential global insertion, geopolitical risks and tangled transnational dynamics have continued to operate since then. As we free ourselves from a methodology of nationalist historicism, we may fully follow the dynamics of a region of multiple “sister nations” that share historical contacts and cultural closeness while developing along varied historical paths, without being able to completely separate themselves from each other, and experiencing persistent processes that extend beyond their borders.

The Significance of Transnational Perspectives for the Study of Latin America

Transnational perspectives have been increasingly adopted by social scientists and historians for studying the massive exodus of peoples, such as those from Africa, in tandem with globalization and neoliberal policies since the 1980s–90s, and for analyzing the phenomenon of family separation, network dispersal, and diaspora formation, for instance, in studies on the Indian or Chinese diasporas. Transnational perspectives have also proved useful for tracing the networks of organized crime, narcotrafficking, and human trafficking, and for studying emerging regional cross-border networks such as those in Europe, asking whether transnational interactions strengthen common understandings on national boundaries, politics and/or religion.

As indicated in the previous sections, the transnational turn also has burgeoned recently in Latin American studies, albeit its full potential has not been achieved yet, as

traditionally, many Latin Americanists devoted their work to one society and state or conducted comparative or international relations studies of the region. Latin America has been, indeed, an ideal laboratory for comparative analysis and international relations, as it is a multistate and polyglot region with a diversity of races, ethnicities, and cultures, and shared historical legacies, institutions, and development challenges.

A transnational perspective adds an important layer of analysis to those approaches by illuminating processes that span multiple societies, possibly highlighting various political, social, and cultural border-crossing experiences. With a transnational perspective, we shall be better equipped to approach a series of key phenomena in the Americas. Among them, the connections between nonstate actors across nations; the indirect effects of geographical and historical proximity; the prolonged and only partial disconnection of nation-state societies from one another; and the reconnection effected intermittently by political exiles, expatriates, sojourners, and other wandering individuals; or the presence of intellectuals and politicians who have prioritized regional culture, legal norms and institutions, for example, as a way to preserve sovereignty against foreign intervention.

All of this leads us to suggest that by limiting our attention only to nation-states as separate entities, we may lose perspective on our societies rather than gain it. Adding a transnational perspective allows us to glimpse multiple layers and regional processes of circulation, transmission, and articulation of ideas, networks, and spaces interlinking actors and movements across national boundaries and state borders. Hereafter, I would like to identify several such areas of specific research where, over a *longue durée*, one can clearly perceive transnational aspects that should be considered when engaging in analysis.

1. *The Transnational Inception of National Identities*

A transnational perspective allows us to visualize the origins of national identities without assuming essentialism, but rather by following the ways in which collective identities were shaped historically in a context of cross-border significance. Paradigmatic in this respect, although not unique, is the case of Uruguay, as its nation-state formation was shaped by the entrepreneurial agency of people living through a transnational experience that ignited their collective self-determination and reliance.

In late colonial times and in the transition to political independence, there was no certainty about the creation of a separate Uruguayan nation and state. Would Uruguay become independent or remain united to the provinces of the Río de la Plata? Alternatively, would it become a state in the Brazilian federation or be annexed by Rio Grande do Sul, one of its member states? Uruguay shared much of its cultural,

environmental, class, and political structure with some of the territories that became part of Argentina, as well as with the Rio Grande do Sul. Unlike Mexico, which had very distinctive historical Aztec and Spanish imperial foundations from which to develop an enduring center of power and an idiosyncratic identity, the development of Uruguay as a separate nation-state was a creation that few expected to last, as the late historian Tulio Halperin Donghi indicated years ago (Halperin Donghi 2000; see also Cameselle-Pesce and Sharnak 2023, 15–92).

Indeed, the land of the Banda Oriental—east of the Uruguay River and north of the Río de la Plata—was entangled in a constant transterritorial dispute. It was thus the target of increasing interventions by the Portuguese and Spanish crowns, and later by the Brazilian empire and the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, which replaced them, respectively. The Portuguese wanted to extend Brazilian control to the “natural” border of the Río de la Plata, while the Spanish authorities and later those in Buenos Aires considered the region another province in their disintegrating jurisdiction, a territory to be controlled or ceded according to tactical considerations. These contradictory demands and the constant predation of local resources by those stronger forces triggered the early emergence of local forces willing to control their own destiny and eventually achieve political self-determination.

A transcendental step in the birth of Uruguayan collective identity occurred as a result of the defeat and forced migration of thousands of Banda Oriental residents from their native territory. The main figure who galvanized the population into such collective action was José Gervasio Artigas, a second commander of the rural gendarmerie founded by Montevideo authorities in the 1790s to maintain order in the countryside. Artigas initially served the Spanish royalist authorities and then the Buenos Aires authorities. However, disillusioned with the Buenos Aires intention to cede the area and fearing Portuguese depredations, in November 1811, Artigas led more than four thousand eastern militiamen and an equal number of fleeing civilians on a month-long journey beyond the armistice lines, across the Uruguay River, to an eight-month encampment in the Argentine province of Entre Ríos, a translocal experience of defiance of transnational forces that formed a protonational consciousness (Achúgar 1998; Roniger 2008), even if in parallel, Artigas’s leadership activated throughout the Southern Cone a transnational project, eventually truncated (Duffau and Frega 2023). Civilians from the Banda Oriental had joined the retreating militias massively in what at the time people called a *redota*, a rustic transposition of the Spanish word *derrota*, defeat.

Many have seen this historical contingency as one of the first visible signs of the birth of the Uruguayan nation, emerging out of the shared experience of expatriation, collective concern, and sociability. Further reinforcing that interpretation of transnational grounding and collective inception of identity out of a transformed lifeworld is realizing

that the role of Artigas between 1811 and 1820 remained open to controversy until the 1880s, when it nearly was beatified (Pivel Devoto 2004). An essentialist attribution of national identity gained ground after that period, in parallel to state consolidation, and reached its high point by the early 1950s, crystalizing in a national cult of civility. After the end of the civilian-military dictatorship and the return to democracy in 1985, that view has been critically evaluated by works of historical revisionism.

2. Transnational State Dismemberment and Subsequent Connections

A contrasting process is that of transnational political disintegration, which can be exemplified by the subregion of Central America. Five Central American countries have their origins in the disintegration of a single state that emerged in 1823–1838 out of a previous joint colonial jurisdiction. From a geopolitical perspective, the Isthmus is today a region made up of separate republics that are geographically close to each other, which made them prone to being affected by transnational processes developing in the neighboring societies and polities. In this domain, research can trace the parallel processes of the construction of separate nation-states as well as the intricate transnational connections between them that affected the modes of adoption of institutional and cultural trends. This is crucial for understanding past events as well as for envisioning the future of that region.

Emerging from imperial disintegration, states eventually strove to create their own nations, attempting to “make them real” through official stories and rituals, the elaboration of hegemonic material and symbolic practices, and the structuring of images of peoples, connected to spatial and temporal limits. Such nation-building strategies involved the partitioning of territories that once belonged to one state, the formation of restricted membership and the delineation of borders, organized according to principles of national sovereignty.

Once separated, the republics faced the double task of consolidating their territorial control and domination, while simultaneously constructing a sense of collective identity through their policies, practices, and public ceremonies. Born out of shared colonial administrative jurisdictions and a brief attempt at unification after independence, the core Central American states moved to construct idiosyncratic national identities as well as develop separate institutional frameworks, but were not able to disengage themselves completely from their “sister republics.” They had to define and create national memberships and boundaries, which involved recognizing certain categories of citizenship as primordial, while replacing, ignoring, or denying—without completely eradicating—previous forms of identification, including pan-Isthmic identity, and subsuming more localized and ethnic identities (Alonso 1994; Woodward Jr. 1999).

For decades after their separation, states had porous and ill-defined territories and could not insulate themselves from regional interventions, whether driven by the prospects of seizing power in their own territory or by the desire to expand their dominance in spaces broader than their administrative territories. Common origins complicated the construction of completely unrelated identities, leaving a legacy of transnational networks of kinship, economic, social, and political ties, and an image of an alternative project of regional nation-building. People could rely on that image when they moved to the neighboring countries or questioned the institutional arrangements and political divisions that prevailed in their own.

From the beginning, elites were fully aware that local identifications existed, but they also recognized that there were no strong lines that necessarily separated republics from one another or that represented each as unalterably different in an incommensurable way. Furthermore, the way in which these states declared their independence meant that they could not imagine their collective identity as a natural fact, but rather as a civic-political achievement. Still, as the process of institution building advanced starting in the 1860s–1880s (Roniger 2022, 56–65), the separate nation-states became increasingly distinct, albeit with recurrent yet failing attempts to recreate transnational political spaces and partially successful moves to establish regional Central American organizations.

In comparative perspective, similar processes of breaking apart can be traced both in the Americas (e.g., in the northern part of South America, in the Andean area, and in the Southern Cone) as well as in processes of imperial breakdown and postimperial rule, for instance in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire or in postcolonial East Asia and East Africa. The specifics of Central America's political dismemberment and persisting transnational connections lie in its geopolitical insertion and the relatively small size of the regional territory. These factors determined that after partition, the republics—albeit moving in different, distinct directions—would remain in close proximity to each other and affected by political processes in the neighboring societies and polities.

Second, the region's strategic location as a natural interoceanic bridge in the Americas meant that transnational forces operated, from very early on, a dynamic of hegemonic and counterhegemonic struggle there, and that later, wars and human rights crises, as well as the processes of postauthoritarian democratization, economic neoliberalism, violence, and criminality, would recreate pronounced transnational impacts. Perhaps the most similar regions to Central America in terms of transnational dynamics in times of war and peace are those of the Balkans in Europe and the Rwanda-Burundi-Eastern Congo complex in Africa.

3. Historical Attempts at Recreating Transnational Political Spaces

By the mid- and late-nineteenth century, Latin American states started overshadowing local solidarities and identities and were much stronger and quotidian than any protonational, panregional, or continental ones.

At the same time, they were also replacing the domain of regional brotherhood and unity imagined by intellectuals, writers, and activists, but they could never eliminate underlying transnational dimensions. Still, since the days when Bolívar imagined but failed to realize his vision of a South American political union in the early nineteenth century, the consciousness of a regional identity never disappeared. On the contrary, it continued to be relevant at the level of elites and social movements. Repeatedly, it produced attempts to create multistate confederations, such as those of Great Colombia (Earle 2005), the Central American Republic (Roniger 2011), or the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation (Demélas 2003), and subsequently promoted the emergence of regional organizations.

Such projects not only were launched by elites willing to expand their positions of power, but also included grassroots attempts, such as the efforts of the unionist movement upon the first centenary of independence in Central America. The core of unionism was made up of intellectuals, teachers, and students, most of them from the upper class, who became disillusioned with liberal and positivist projects and refused to recognize the true republic of their dreams in the states of their time. The unionists wanted to regenerate the nation, promote spiritual awareness of a shared destiny among all the inhabitants of the Isthmus, and create a just society in which people would enjoy basic guarantees and rights, regardless of ethnic differences, gender, class, or marital status. In their vision, Central America had to be united as a region and then, also, Mexico and South America would be in a stronger position to resist US economic interests (Casaús Arzú 2006).

Imbued with the vision of regeneration of Central America on the eve of the 100th anniversary of the end of Spanish rule, and being displaced as exiles or expatriates, many unionists wandered through the region, promoting the unionist creed in the new surroundings. The unionists were fully aware of the failure of previous projects to unite Central America but believed in the rebirth of a united nation from the bottom up, a goal that would be achieved by promoting an awareness of common destiny and building a model of equality, social justice, and tolerance based on unity, yet respecting the autonomy of the various societies (García Giráldez 2005; Roniger 2017).

Unionists reactivated a latent transnational commitment, and, although their transnational project failed, they had an important long-term impact on the expansion of

Central American public spheres in the 1920s–40s, through the creation of many publications, along with the opening of spaces of sociability accessible beyond the distinctions of gender, nationality, and to a lesser extent, social class or ethnicity. These forums and spaces for sociability also expanded public debate on issues such as the incorporation of subaltern sectors and indigenous and mestizo women into full citizenship. Those ideas continued to reverberate among revolutionary leaders like Nicaraguan Augusto César Sandino, who traveled widely throughout the region and whose activists came from all the territories of Central America and even from Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Furthermore, when Sandino traveled to Mexico in 1929 to try to gain support, he used a Honduran passport while crossing the territories of El Salvador and Guatemala with the knowledge of their governments (Wunderlich 1989; Schroeder 2019).

4. *The Historical and Sociological Study of Frontier Areas*

Many frontier areas present a dense demographic physiognomy, where the logic of nation-states does not dominate the transnational realities of life. Illustrative are both Bolivia's Antofagasta on the eve of the Pacific War (1879–83) and the frontier areas between the Dominican Republic and Haiti before the 1937 massacre of mixed Dominican populations of Haitian ascent.

During the first six decades of the nineteenth century, the Atacama area witnessed innumerable armed confrontations in the wars of independence, with guerrilla warfare, civil wars, and attacks by armed bands and international forces. This was a Bolivian territory with significant resources coveted by both Peruvian and Chilean-English economic forces interested in positioning themselves in international markets. What ultimately led to the Pacific War, in which both Bolivia and Peru lost a large mass of territory to Chile, was the demographic makeup of the frontier area and the transnational reach of local interests.

In the 1870s, guano and saltpeter unleashed a developmental “rush” cycle similar to the Californian gold rush a few decades earlier. In this context, a major actor was the Company of Nitrates and Railroads of Antofagasta, Bolivia (CSFA), of Chilean-British capital led by Chilean Agustín Edwards, which operated under tax exemption per a Chilean-Bolivian treaty of 1874. With the opening of economic opportunities in that region, a huge number of poor and adventurous Chilean workers swooped in and settled in the area, transforming Antofagasta and Caracoles into populous cities.

Soon enough, the so-called Littoral Province—a true Bolivian Far West—found itself under the weak but no less despotic control of a few Bolivian forces stationed there. These forces were supposed to impose order over a massive number of Chilean *rotos* (poor,

destitute men), prone to engage in violence, banditry, and street altercations. Any unplanned confrontation occurring under such circumstances could have wider repercussions. In October 1876, a mutual aid society was founded in Antofagasta and soon attracted a membership of about ten thousand Chileans and a few Bolivians. It functioned as a lodge and promoted the idea of Chilean fraternity (members swore on the Chilean flag) and dreamed of eventual political emancipation of the Littoral, something already envisioned in the USA in California (Vicuña Mackenna 1880; Barros 2015). Then, it was enough for a miscalculated policy decision by Bolivian President Hilarión Daza—to enact a tax on nitrates extracted by the CSFA in the province, despite the legal provision that exempted nitrate from taxation—for the Pacific War to start in 1879.

Similarly, the border area of the Dominican Republic and Haiti was home to communities that spoke a mixture of Creole Haitian and Spanish and whose commercial markets and closest pilgrimage centers were in Haitian territory. The population did not lack “mixed” couples and connections of all kinds between “pure” Dominicans and others. There were no major conflicts over land in that border area, as it had a small population and abundant land. Nor was there any acute competition between residents. The “Haitians” had developed various crafts, worked in domestic occupations in urban areas, and in tobacco cultivation and cattle ranching in the rural areas, while the rural “Dominicans” engaged in extensive cattle raising in remote fields (Derby 1994).

Since the beginning of the twentieth century and during the United States invasion of 1916–1924, the central government tried to control the border areas, overcoming regional elites and preventing revolutionaries from organizing in neighboring Haiti and challenging Santo Domingo. In the 1930s, Rafael Trujillo imposed power structures and tried unsuccessfully to Dominicanize the border through colonization projects and legal decisions. Among other measures, his administration called on Haitians to leave the border areas, even offering some financial help. The legal ordinances did not have much echo along the border, as the inhabitants considered it their homeland. Unsurprisingly, they stayed and continued to circulate freely, crossing the borderline from one side to the other. Most of those portrayed as “Haitians” were Dominicans of Haitian descent whose ancestors settled there generations earlier, attracted by work opportunities in the plantations sustained with US capital.

Intending to end the transnational makeup of the frontier area and consolidate a non-African identity for Dominicans, Trujillo emphasized the cultural and racial differences between the country and neighboring Haiti and resented the transnational miscegenation and cultural hybridity of the population in the border areas. In October 1937, Dominican Republic soldiers and guards massacred between 15,000 and 17,000 Dominican settlers of Haitian descent in the western-northern border area of the country. Most victims, including women and children, were killed with machetes, bayonets, and sticks, with the

express design of presenting the brutal massacre as stemming from anti-Haitian popular anger among Dominicans in the border area, not the result of state decisions. Months later, in the spring of 1938, thousands more Haitians were deported, an operation that came to be known as “the eviction” (Turits 2002).

Historically, there was animosity between the DR and Haiti, derived from the history of annexation of the Dominican territory by the black republic of Haiti and the wars of liberation. However, those were remote events, and those massacred were native Dominicans born in the national territory. Furthermore, from the perspective of those residing at the border, the so-called Haitians were intimately part of local transnational networks, even if not without tension (Turits 2003; Derby 2009). These events, like those in the Bolivian-Chilean frontier, can be made intelligible only by intertwining nation-state dynamics within transnational perspectives.

5. The Role and Impact of Displaced Networks: Exiles, Migrants, and Sojourners

Territorial displacement and particularly political exile have been major mechanisms of institutionalized exclusion in Latin America, but they also functioned as a regional mechanism of reconnection between social and political actors displaced from multiple countries in the region.

In the transition to political independence, Latin American states all incorporated exile as a major political practice, along with other means of punishment. The translocation of political enemies beyond the areas directly controlled by the emerging states in the region became a transnational issue tied up with the definition of borders and the configuration of nation-state identities. In the nineteenth century, such dynamics of displacement were evident in several regional spaces characterized by territorial spillover and conflict, namely: in the frontier spaces of Peru, Bolivia, and Chile; Chile and Cuyo across the Andes; Buenos Aires, Uruguay, and Rio Grande do Sul; New Granada, Venezuela, and parts of Ecuador; as well as Mexico and Central America. In an era in which the nation-states were an ongoing project rather than a consolidated reality, exiles engaged in political struggles, found work, sold books, and circulated news in countries emerging from civil war. Through commercial routes and evolving networks, exiled men of letters and action contributed to the formation of a transnational public sphere, through which they spread political ideas back to the societies of origin while also integrating into host societies (Blumenthal 2019).

Historians and social scientists have increasingly acknowledged the formative and constitutive role and systemic impacts of exile, migration, and sojourn in Latin America (Roniger 2023). In the collective outlook of these countries, forced migration and exile

became a central mode of “doing politics,” an institutionalized mechanism of political exclusion. During the Cold War, the displaced individuals claimed a voice of their own on the future of their society, while progressively inserting themselves and having an influence also on host societies and polities (Yankelevich and Jensen 2007; Sznajder and Roniger 2009, 136–256). Living in exile shaped political ideas and self-representations. Many émigrés participated in public debates and republican institution building in their host countries (Jensen 2021).

Forcefully displaced individuals who left their home countries formed diasporas and networks of conationals that influenced the host countries, affected the reputation and policies of the home countries, and prompted both expelling and host countries to agree on asylum practices and policies. Exiles as well as migrants and sojourners have played key roles both as part of national diasporas while abroad, and also upon return, when at least some of them came back to the home countries once democracies were restored and institutional impairments were revoked (Lastra 2016; Roniger, Senkman, Sosnowski, and Sznajder 2022). Equally important are transnational diaspora studies such as Bokser Liwerant and Della Pergola (2022).

6. The Experience and Transnational Horizons of Many Latin American Intellectuals

Throughout the two centuries of political independence, there have been intellectuals who claimed to speak not only on behalf of their nations but also of sister nations and shaped intellectual and social networks, both reformist and revolutionary, committed to continental activism. Examples abound. Paradigmatic were, among others, Latin American modernists whose influence was projected transnationally. During his long exile, the Cuban poet, essayist, and activist José Martí moved to the USA, and from there his voice became known transnationally through his columns in periodicals published in Buenos Aires, Caracas, and Mexico. The Nicaraguan Rubén Darío published his book of stories and poems *Azul* in Valparaíso and was able to read and be inspired by French authors consulted in a private library in San Salvador. The Peruvian poet and diplomat José Santos Chocano published not only in his native Peru but also in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Chile.

The early twentieth-century movements of Arielismo and Criollismo that claimed a Latin American identity rather than a narrow nationalism are another example (Franco 1970, 52–81). That same dynamic has been registered at later periods (see e.g., Rivera 2014, Pita González 2016). In all these movements, intellectuals were also political figures whose writings mobilized action and whose activism inspired their cultural work, and their work served political ends (De Imaz 1979, 233–236), with a long-term impact on the intermittent recreation of ideas and works stressing Latin American solidarity.

7. *The Crystallization of Regional Legal Practices and Doctrines*

We can also trace the crystallization of regional legal practices and doctrines imbued with the transnational spirit of Bolivarianism. Based on common origins, culture, and institutions, Latin Americans not only struggled to fix the porous borders of their independent states but also managed to establish international norms of regional interaction and coexistence (Kacowicz 2005). Ideally, these doctrines were aimed at regulating international relations and reducing tensions between the states of the region, as evidenced by the early elaboration of the principles of nonintervention, the rejection of territorial gains through armed conflicts, the right of asylum to protect and control the presence of political exiles in receiving societies (Blumenthal 2021), and various mediation and diplomatic negotiation mechanisms.

Among Latin Americans who contributed to that direction while participating in international fora, organizations, and networks are Estanislao Zeballos and José Batlle y Ordóñez. After concluding his first presidency in Uruguay in 1907, Batlle y Ordóñez traveled to the Peace Conference in The Hague, where he participated by representing his country and in which he presented a project for the League of Nations, anticipating the creation by a decade of an institution of such character. Likewise, he presented another early project for compulsory arbitration of international conflicts, an idea imbued with the Bolivarian spirit (Anónimo 1928). Several times national deputy and three times minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina, Estanislao S. Zeballos (1854–1923) played an important role in international law forums such as the Institut de Droit International and the International Law Association. In his role as a jurist, he proposed an “Argentine theory of Private Human Law” that consisted of formulating in terms of internationalist doctrine the foundations of Argentine migration policies, more open than European ones, by accepting migrants and recognizing their fundamental rights without seeing in this an attack on national sovereignty (González Bernaldo de Quirós 2018).

8. *The Transnational Diffusion of Ideas*

Another common phenomenon across the region has been the transnational diffusion of ideas as drivers for action. In the twentieth century, paramount was the drive to develop and modernize, an idea that, even if interpreted in contrasting ways by, for example, liberals, Marxists, or neoconservatives, filtered down transnationally both among elites and in the popular strata of all countries.

Throughout the region, the confrontation with Western modernity has been a confrontation with roots, discourses, and institutions that turned out to be their own due to colonial and postcolonial domination, with resonance in the sister nations. From very

early on, the dynamics of Western development linked these American territories to global and transnational arenas, turning modernity into something multiple but truncated, and leading to recurring attempts to reconstitute and achieve the unfulfilled promises of modernity in the region (Roniger 2022, 23–44; Lehmann 2022). For example, there has been much debate throughout the entire region on the modernity of Latin America: when, where, and how Latin America is or has been modern. The controversy and subsequent debate have continued for two centuries, transforming the region into one of the most exciting places of thought and reflection on collective identities in the world (Miller and Hart 2007).

Likewise, theorists of dependency such as Celso Furtado, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Theotonio dos Santos, Ruy Mauro Marini, and Vania Bambirra developed their reflexivity and ideas while living through a transnational experience in Chile, then the seat of CEPAL (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), and later in Mexico, one of the key places of relocation for those escaping Southern Cone repression. The Fondo de Cultura Económica and the journals *Trimestre Económico* and *Cuadernos Políticos* published their work and helped in the diffusion of their thought on a transnational scale until it became popularly known through the daily press in most Latin American countries. Furthermore, Furtado's professorship in the USA, as well as at the IEDES (Institut d'étude du développement économique et social) and the Institut des Hautes Études de l'Amérique Latine in Paris granted dependency theory further respectability among wide audiences (Sáenz Carrete 2014).

Similarly, the thought of figures of Liberation Theology reverberated across state borders, accumulating symbolic and social capital among progressive networks partly thanks to the free-floating resources and material positions of the clergy as part of the Catholic Church. Although most of the Church's high hierarchy did not back the ideas of Liberation theologians like Brazilian Leonardo Boff or the decision of several of them to join revolutionary forces, as in the case of Colombian Camilo Torres, some bishops across the region were open to the messages, which facilitated the transnational diffusion of those ideas. Among these bishops were Oscar Arnulfo Romero, who was assassinated in El Salvador for his defiance of the military rulers; Evaristo Arns, Avelar Brandao, Pedro Casaldáliga, Helder Cámara, Aloiso Lorscheider, José María Pires, and Candido Padin in Brazil; Sergio Méndez Arceo and Samuel Ruiz in Mexico; Raúl Silva Henríquez, who somehow protected the Liberation Theology priests in Chile; Juan Landázuri Ricketts and José Dammert in Perú; Eduardo Pironio and Jorge Novak in Argentina; Leónidas Proaño in Ecuador; and Marco MacGrath in Panamá (Chaouch 2007).

Also starting in the 1960s, left-wing forces were impacted by the success and resilience of the Cuban revolution, with multiple movements adopting armed struggles and uprisings, under the veneer of revolutionary vanguards that would eventually generate popular

insurrections and mobilizations. Some of these movements transcended the diffusion of ideas alone to attempt a transnational revolutionary cooperation such as in the Southern Cone, where their project was crushed by the parallel transnational repression of Operation Condor security forces (more on this in a later section).

Another emblematic example of the transnational diffusion of ideas is the emergence of Native American and Afro-American movements vindicating cultural recognition, heritages, and territory. Some of these projects were expressed in terms of collective autonomy and demands, while others were phrased as intercultural projects (Stolle-McAllister 2019; Lehmann 2022). Whether starting as demands for collective recognition of self-determination and control of land resources, as in Ecuador, Bolivia, Mexico, and Chile, or of Afro-American heritages and claims along the Atlantic and Caribbean coasts, these initiatives spread transnationally in the continent and the Caribbean. They led progressively to the formation of cross-national organizations such as the Alianza Estratégica de Afrodescendientes de América Latina y el Caribe, the Reunión de Autoridades Indígenas del Mercosur, or the Red de Mujeres Afrocaribeñas (Bengoa 2000; Álvarez, Oliva, and Zúñiga 2009).

9. *Populations Settled in Transnational Spaces*

There are populations in the Americas whose very location and life/world experience detaches them from the sole logic of any single nation-state. Since colonial times, Hispanic settlement in Central America was concentrated close to the Pacific, while the Caribbean seaside remained connected with the Caribbean islands, where the British had a greater presence. With independence, most states adopted a cultural program of citizenship that promoted ideologies of mestization negating the symbolic presence of subaltern sectors, disparaging indigenous and Afro-American cultures and envisioning their integration or disappearance (Casaús 1992; Wolfe 2007). Contrastingly, the need for forced or intensive labor in enclave economies, especially for coffee, cacao, and later, bananas and tropical fruits, brought about numerous concentrations of individuals of African backgrounds to the Circum-Caribbean. These populations were engrossed by escapees and pirates, traders, and survivors from shipwrecks. In addition, their descendants lived within native populations, creating societies that differed from the idealized symbolic national representation and became a transnational border presence in the Caribbean region (Whitehead 1995; Pineda 2006; Velázquez 2011).

The cases of the Miskitu and the Garifuna are emblematic of mixed groups with a transnational presence and not fully subservient to the logic of the nation-states. For reasons of space, I shall focus on the Miskitu. For more than two hundred years, a Miskitu kingdom prevailed under an alliance with the British that included trade (Rogers 2002). Unlike the Pacific region, the center of Spanish control of indigenous peoples, the Atlantic

region had become a borderland open to the predatory actions of buccaneers and the informal British presence at the northern Nicaraguan and Honduran coast. Over time, this region became a multicultural and multiethnic area in which Protestant, Afro-American, and Amerindian religious and linguistic elements coexisted. The Miskitu claimed as theirs an area that included roughly half of Nicaraguan “national territory.”

Nicaragua incorporated by military force this sparsely populated and culturally distinct area into its jurisdiction only in the early 1890s. When the Sandinistas took power in 1979, their nation-state logic collided with that of the Miskitu. The Sandinistas saw the Miskitu as “foreigners” linked to British colonialism and US imperialism, and repressed any attempted resistance to their policies of forceful incorporation into the nation-state. The government feared the Miskitu’s cooperation with the Contras and adopted policies of forced relocation in the Río Coco region. Miskitu leaders accused the Sandinistas of human rights violations while suppressing their resistance. They lodged a complaint with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) that included charges of detentions, trials, imprisonment, disappearances, and forced relocation. In contrast, the government claimed it had evacuated the Miskitu from the region as a protective measure because of Contra attacks.

The Sandinistas suspected the Miskitu to be conspiring with both the FDN, the anti-Sandinista National Democratic Front that—supported by the CIA—operated in Honduras near the Nicaraguan border, and the ARDE, the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance, which operated from Costa Rica against the Sandinistas. The Miskitu, among the most organized and belligerent of the coast residents, led armed uprisings against what they considered a new form of coercion. Supported by the Moravian Church, the largest denomination in the region, the Miskitu resisted and reasserted their collective identity and memory as part of an oppressed transnational minority fighting against the “Sandinista oppressors” (García 2014). The Miskitu became an embarrassment to the revolutionary administration, which claimed to be representing the people of Nicaragua and yet found itself forced to recognize the existence of a transnational group that challenged its homogenizing narrative and rhetoric of revolutionary nationalism.

10. Transnational Practices and Operations

During the Cold War, Latin America experienced the growing impact of transnational networks embedding ideological confrontations, as evidenced by the rise of transnational coordination among revolutionary guerrilla movements after the Cuban Revolution, as well as parallel coordinated efforts of counterinsurgency.

The transnational coordination of repression of Leftist movements and activists during the Cold War was unveiled in 1992 as Paraguayan attorney Martín Almada, who had

experienced prison and exile under General Alfredo Stroessner (1954–1989) proceeded to use the clause of the right to access information (*habeas data*) found in the constitution that had been promulgated after Stroessner's fall to look for records from the dictatorship. The huge amount of documentation unveiled in an office of the Investigations Police—and today known as the “Archive of Terror”—included not just information on surveillance, victims and collaborators of the Paraguayan authoritarian regime, but also reports on the transnational repressive cooperation of the armed and security forces of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay in the so-called Operation Condor aimed at annihilating the guerrillas and their supporters during the Cold War (McSherry 2002). As is well known, this generated transnational networks of solidarity and advocacy on behalf of the victims, exiles, and prisoners, opposing the home dictatorships and demanding accountability, truth, and justice, something that increasingly has led to policies of transitional justice, some with transnational reach and implications (Sikkink 2011; Stites Mor 2013; Lessa 2022).

An interesting aspect of that process was this: as the authoritarian repressive wave started to break down, because the repression of Leftist forces was conducted transnationally, the confrontation with the legacies of massive human rights violations generated a process of transnational reverberation; revelations by repressors or the finding of a corpse in one country forced coming to terms with the results of state terror and repression in neighboring countries (Sznajder and Roniger 1999). While expectations climbed very high during democratization, as new governments adopted policies of transitional justice, the restored democracies of South and Central America soon had to wrangle with new challenges, among them the rise in transnational practices and operations launched by narcotraffickers and their control and repression.

11. Multilateral Regionalist Initiatives

Transnational agendas have emerged in Latin America from time to time. I mentioned above the Unionists and APRA in the early twentieth century. More recently, equally significant cases are those of the Foro de São Paulo (FSP) and Chavismo, both of which aimed at connecting progressive parties, organizations, and movements from Latin America and the Caribbean. The FSP was launched in 1990 by Brazil's Partido dos Trabalhadores as a forum to discuss the transformation of the international scene after the fall of the Berlin Wall, primarily the wave of neoliberalism that was taking hold of economic policies in the Americas. Its meetings across the Americas have attracted dozens of social democratic parties, labor and social movements, ethnic and environmentalist groups, Communist parties, and anti-imperialist groups, to discuss representative and participatory democracy, leftist experiences and options, authoritarian setbacks, and Latin American integration (forodesaopaulo.org). The FSP has been accused by right-wing forces of providing extremist policy recommendations

and spearheading authoritarian Leftist populism, leading a few dozen organizations of exiles from Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba in 2019 to launch a countervailing Parallel Forum, later renamed the Democratic Forum (Foro América Libre 2023).

Likewise, once in power in Venezuela, Hugo Chávez promoted the recreation of a vision uniting peoples in the Americas. As a legitimization strategy, he adopted a catchall credo named *Nuestramérica* and supported it by channeling material assistance to struggling partners in Latin America and the Caribbean. Soon, different social movements across the region cultivated fraternal ties through meetings and celebratory aesthetics, resorting to the mobilization of popular sectors as a base of support. Political movements, student associations, ethnoreligious groups, and other types of civil society organizations developed transnational and transcontinental ties and organized joint events, which helped to recognize themselves as part of a common tradition with icons, symbols, and even shared heroes.

Chavistas found common ground with social movements such as the Mexican Zapatistas, Brazil's landless peasant movement, Argentina's picketers, and Bolivia's coca growers (Roberts 2006, 141–143). Furthermore, the alliance with Fidel and Raúl Castro's Cuba also provided an extensive network of political activists who had historically mobilized in the region and beyond in favor of the Cuban regime. Chavistas cultivated popular mobilization in favor of their political causes, extrapolating abroad the strategy of internal legitimization headed by the motto of "People's Power" and the appropriation and resignification of historical and regional memory. The growing appeal to mobilize transnational collectives implied a discursive attack on rival transnational elites that characterized the liberal post-Cold War order, as well as the readiness to use national revenues for collective needs, targeting transnational networks and publics (Ayala 2006). The systematic use of the concept of *Nuestramérica* as a legitimization strategy turned out to be foundational in the Summit of Maracay in June 2009, when ALBA (then called the "Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas"), was officially renamed the "Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Treaty of Commerce of the People" (Wajner and Roniger 2019).

These multilateral regionalist initiatives, supported by numerous organizations, parties, and movements have already led to the emergence of regional cooperation frameworks, including the South American Community of Nations (later UNASUR), the transformed Southern Common Market MERCOSUR, and the first fully encompassing Latin American organization: the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States or CELAC (Rivera 2014). As one anonymous reviewer pointed out in their reading of an earlier draft of this article, there is still room for debate and systematic research on the role played by different state and nonstate actors in this new surge of multilateral regionalist initiatives.

Conclusions

This article suggests that, in addition to nation-state studies, comparative analysis, or the logic of international relations, one should also consider applying transnational perspectives in Latin American Studies. The review of the above research areas, albeit concise, illustrates the rich potential of using such transnational perspectives in Latin American Studies. Beyond the question of the appropriate line of analysis to be followed in each subject, adding a transnational perspective allows considering the full impact of social, political, and cultural forces at work without assuming *a priori* a convergence of citizenship, territory, and national identity. In many cases, only then would analysis fully account for the articulation of local and national dynamics with international and global dynamics.

A transnational perspective applied to Latin America seems highly instrumental in approaching aspects such as the historical and sociological study of frontier areas; the contacts and networks between individuals and sectors of different countries, be they intellectuals, professionals, activists, members of the armed forces, or criminals, among others; the transformational impact of political exiles, migrants, travelers, and sojourners who come and go across state borders; the study of cultural and commercial exchanges, of national diasporas, and of the transfer of ideas and ideologies; and the study of transnational social movements interacting betwixt and between various states, civil societies, and international actors.

I can foresee at least three advantages in taking transnational dimensions into account, adding power to case studies focused on specific countries and subnational areas. The first is to possibly identify transnational dynamics and forces that have existed in the region since colonial times but remained largely ignored during the era of nation-state consolidation, as exemplified by the struggles of the Miskitu in Nicaragua. The second is to overcome academic compartmentalization, fully bringing Brazil (and the Caribbean) together with Spanish-speaking societies, as illustrated in discussions of political exile or the role of the Foro de São Paulo and of Chavismo in the emergence of multilateral regionalist initiatives. The third is to highlight long-term historical processes that, articulated and projected by political actors, intellectuals, and activists, have affected the entire region or parts thereof, with impacts that have extended beyond the borders of each distinct state and society, creating both amicable and conflictual bridges between them and recreating intermittently a sense of rather intense regional interactions across nation-state borders.

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