

## **CRIME, CIDADANIA E RAÇA: DILEMAS LATINO-AMERICANOS NA DOCTRINA DE SEGURANÇA**

*Crime, citizenship and race: Latin American dilemmas in security doctrine*

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### **Introduction**

Latin America (LA) over the past century has experienced a period of relative interstate peace, free from the bloody wars typically seen in other global regions, such as Europe (CENTENO, 2002; MARES, 2001). The region, however, is also the most violent and unsafe in the world. Los Cabos, Mexico, the deadliest city in the world in 2017, boasts about 111.33 deaths per every 100,000 residents (SEGURIDAD, JUSTICIA Y PAZ, 2018: 3), making many of the region's urban areas resemble combat zones. This paradoxically results in LA having what some scholars term a "violent" or "hybrid" peace (BATTAGLIO, 2012; MARES, 2001). This article discusses and analyses the historical trajectory that contributed to this development, specifically analyzing post-Cold War security doctrine in the region through a racial lens. Using historical process-tracing and a review of previous academic literature, we describe how the constitution of national identities, as well as state articulations of "citizenship" and "crime," has resulted in a specific way of viewing and treating afro-descendent people across LA. This process has also contributed to the current security crisis across the hemisphere.

### **Post-cold war security thinking**

Since the end of the Cold War, the field of security studies within international relations (IR) has been expanded beyond traditional questions of nuclear deterrence, conventional warfare, and so forth to include new areas of research (WALT, 1991). These topics included food security, human rights, economic development, etc., and greatly expanded the scholarly conversation within security studies. As Walt posits though, this expansion created two negative side effects: first it diluted the field and overburdened its research agenda, and secondly it allowed states to approach these problems with more traditional security methods

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(WALT, 1991). On the surface this might not appear problematic, but as we see across LA, when street crime, education, and so forth are securitized, the state is able to escalate these issues by employing conventional military solutions. Moreover, states can approach security problems differently than social welfare issues since these require less public debate, citizen input, and can be conducted with secrecy or unilateral decision-making (BUZAN; WEAVER; DE WILDE, 1998; TICKNER, 2016). This securitization of non-traditional issues contributed to the current escalation of crime and homicide rates that we see throughout the region.

Almost concurrently with this phenomenon, the third wave of democratization in LA allowed many of the region's nascent democracies to redefine their security strategies. The National Security Doctrine (NSD) of the previous authoritarian regimes mainly focused on anti-terrorism and the pursuit of leftist political dissidents, which resulted in Operation Condor and the murder of thousands during the Cold War (TICKNER, 2016; MCSHERRY, 2005). The transition towards democracy that began in the 1980s allowed the new regimes to reorient security towards what some scholars have called "Democratic Security" which focused on civilian control of the armed forces, reducing mutual distrust between neighbors, and consolidating democratic institutions (TICKNER, 2016). This view of security in many ways aimed to securitize the state more than individuals and protect it specifically from military coups.

Other scholars, such as Daniel Goldstein, have framed the post-authoritarian regime security doctrines as "Citizen Security" or one that, "focuses almost exclusively on threats posed by criminality; it demonizes criminals, authorizes state and popular violence, and undermines citizens' basic rights in exchange for a promised security (GOLDSTEIN, 2016: 139)." Although more focused on crime and the current internal security dilemmas facing many LA countries, this security doctrine still emphasizes the centrality of the state within security matters (FRUHLING; TULCHIN, 2003; LEAL BUITRAGO, 2003). What no government in the region after the Cold War and democratization did, however, was reorient its security doctrine towards "Human Security," a concept developed by the United Nations that prioritizes human rights, economic security, gender issues, and so forth (GOLDSTEIN, 2016; TICKNER, 2016). In LA, whether we view it as democratic or citizen security, doctrinal thinking since the 1990s has revolved around the security of the *state*, not *individuals* (MARQUARDT, 2012). In the following section we will problematize this turn in security thinking by analyzing in what ways preconceived notions of citizenship and race affect the outcomes of these securitization processes.

### **Latin America's racial legacy**

Latin American states, since their foundation, have been constituted with a specific view of "citizenship" that excluded and devalued afro-descendent people (CENTENO, 2002; LYNCH, 1986). This can be seen in the legacy of colonial rebellions against Spain, where the popular uprisings of indigenous and other groups led by Miguel Hidalgo in Mexico were repressed and exterminated by Creole elites (LYNCH, 1986). The best example of this is probably Haiti where a Black-led independence movement terrorized elites across the continent, and subsequently led to a sustained effort by outside actors to contain the revolution (JAMES, 1989).

Although the region is the birthplace of nationalism and nationalist identity – the type of nationalist identity that was constituted was one of predominantly White Creole dominance and racial superiority (ANDERSON, 1983). The presence and identity of Black people and their communities was obscured and erased by post-independence governments to suit their preferred vision of themselves and ensure social control over these masses (GATES, 2012).

What resulted was a whitewashing across the region of racial identity and an expurgation of “blackness.” As Ianni writes, “The nation can be viewed as a historical configuration, in which social forces, economic activities, political arrangements, cultural productions, regional diversity, and racial multiplicities are organized, synthesized, and developed (author’s translation, 1988: 5).” Our point here is to call special attention to those “racial multiplicities” and the way in which certain races, and racial categories, were given preference during the creation of the nation, as well as the delimitation of who has the right to claim citizenship. As many Latin American thinkers, such as Martí, Mariátegui, and Quijano, have argued, across the region notions of land, race, and people have been often defined to the detriment of indigenous and afro-descendent communities. In other words, LA’s black roots and identities have been partially erased by various nation-building processes – along with the contributions of afro-descendent people. For example, in Cuba independence leader Antonio Maceo is typically depicted as “white” on the 5 *Pesos* note, even though he is black (GATES, 2012). This process can be interpreted overall as a form of what Galtung called, “Cultural Violence,” which was then translated historically into rather physical violence (1990).

We also see this pattern of submersing afro-descendent people and their identity in the physical layout and construction of space in LA. As historian Jeffery Needell has argued, in Brazil many “public” spaces were in fact constructed as private ones, and although there was no legal segregation, psychological methods were (and are) used to exclude afro-descendent people from certain parts and zones of cities (NEEDELL, 1995). This has resulted in a clear schism across Latin American countries between the center and periphery of cities, or zones of citizenship and citizens *v. others* (HOLSTON, 2009; MARQUES, 2012). It also allows crime and criminality to be associated with the periphery of cities and other areas inhabited by “non-citizens,” (LUCERO, 2016) which are coincidentally usually inhabited by people of color, positioned as internal others against whom the “real” national identity is set.

### **Crime in Latin America currently**

Scholar Miguel Centeno accurately sums up the conception of crime in LA by stating, “The enemy, as defined by state elites, has been *within*, defined racially, along class lines, and by critical ideological struggles (italics in original, CENTENO, 2002: 66).” Said differently, since democratization states redefined security doctrine and securitized many public policy issues, specifically crime and criminality, using more conventional military tactics to address them. The enemy of “the state” across the region is characterized as an internal one, usually a man of color, who must be dealt with heavy-handedly by the state (LUCERO, 2008, 2016). Meanwhile, these people have had their citizenship erased or truncated and live in the regions of metropolitan

areas that have been associated with crime and criminality (BERKMAN, 2007; ROTKER, 2002). For instance, as one recent report about crime in Brazil states: “It is as if in regards to lethal violence, black and non-black people lived in completely different countries. In 2016, for example, the homicide rate for black people was two and a half times higher than that for non-blacks (16% versus 40.2%) (author’s translation, IPEA/FBSP, 2018: 40).”

Although devoid of violent interstate conflict, LA is a region ripe with intrastate conflict, such as urban crime that often leads to ungoverned or ungovernable spaces (CLUNAN; TRINKUNAS, 2010). For instance, in 2017, according to one report 44 of the world’s 50 most dangerous cities are in Latin America, 17 in Brazil alone (SEGURIDAD, JUSTICIA Y PAZ 2017: 3-4), which creates a struggle between the state and non-state groups for control over the national territory. Governments who have securitized urban crime since in the 1990s have been able to apply military tactics and weapons in response to this threat with little public outcry, because these individuals are labeled as internal enemies of the state and racially excluded from the category of “citizen” (BRICEÑO LEON; ZUBILLAGA, 2002). The outcomes of this process are omnipresent throughout the region’s urban areas and political discourses. Across Mexico and various Central American countries, for instance, governments implemented numerous tough on crime policies to address gangs (RODGERS, 2009; WATT; ZEPEDA, 2012; WOLF, 2017). The results, as we see with El Salvador’s *La Mano Dura* (“Heavy-Hand”) approach, has not been a reduction in crime; but rather an escalation in violence and human rights violations (HUME, 2007; RODGERS, 2009; WOLF, 2017).

Another well-documented case of this process has been the operations of the “Pacifying Police” in Brazil’s *favelas* (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2017). Given the government’s consent to eradicate criminals, the Brazilian police (predominantly male and white) began rather violent campaigns to bring the periphery back under state control (BARCELLOS; ZALUAR, 2014; DELLASOPPA, 2012). In exchange for tenuous security, residents in these areas had to accommodate a militarized presence and constant human rights abuses (MOREIRA ALVES; EVANSON, 2011; PENGLASE, 2014). What resulted is a lack of respect for these peripheral communities and for the bodies of afro-descendent residents, as they become expendable and subject to extrajudicial killing, considering they are not included within the category of “citizen.” Once again, the deaths of afro-descendent people tend to spark little public outcry because they can be discursively labeled under the motif of “criminal” or “public enemy.” Also, individuals who stand up to this status quo and attempt to redefine the category the citizen to include afro-descendent inhabitants in peripheral regions are then subject to violence, as the assassination of Rio de Janeiro city council member Marielle Franco exemplifies.

## Conclusion

Latin America presents a security puzzle: almost inexistent interstate conflict, but ubiquitous intra-state violence. As outlined here, this problem in part arose as post-authoritarian governments redefined their security doctrines, and the field of security studies within IR was expanded to include more non-traditional

issues. This gave governments the ability to treat criminal activity with a more conventional military approach. By taking these problems from the security realm and desecuritizing them we could then endeavor new solutions. For instance, drug use in urban peripheries could be seen as a public health problem and treated with doctors and rehabilitation centers, not with force and incarceration alone. Furthermore, the decriminalization of marijuana and an end to the war on drugs could also greatly reduce urban violence and trafficking. Police and the military have an auxiliary role to play in solving the region's internal security problems; but currently they are overburdened with the entire responsibility. Applying traditional security strategies to LA's current security issues is particularly problematic because of the region's racialized conception of national identity that excludes afro-descendent people from the category of citizen. The academic and policy communities must understand the links between race, crime, and citizenship in LA if we are ever to ameliorate the region's "hybrid peace." The research agenda and debate are ripe for future analysis of these issues, as our current approaches to reducing violence in the region's cities have not provided many desirable outcomes.

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## RESUMO

O seguinte artigo utiliza uma abordagem interdisciplinar para entender alguns dos paradoxos atuais em torno da violência interna na América Latina. Ao analisar a raça, a cidadania e outros legados históricos na região, discutimos o desenvolvimento da “cidadania” e do “crime” como categorias de exclusão e inclusão social. Especificamente, diferentes doutrinas de segurança são analisadas para entender melhor como esses processos evoluíram desde o fim da Guerra Fria. Na seção de encerramento, são apresentadas algumas soluções possíveis.

**Palavras-chave:** Doutrina de Segurança; América Latina; Cidadania; Raça.

## ABSTRACT

The following article employs an interdisciplinary approach to understanding some of the current paradoxes around internal violence in Latin America. By analyzing race, citizenship, and other historical legacies in the region we discuss the development of “citizenship” and “crime” as categories for social exclusion and inclusion. Specifically, different security doctrines are analyzed to better understand how these processes have evolved since the end of the Cold War. In the closing section, some possible solutions are presented.

**Key-words:** Security Doctrine; Latin America; Citizenship; Race.