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Pushing Boundaries
New Directions in Contemporary
Latin America-Middle East History



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Pushing Boundaries New Directions in Contemporary Latin America-Middle East History

Lily Balloffet, Fernando Camacho Padilla, Jessica Stites Mor

Abstract. - This dossier addresses some of the lesser-explored historical legacies of the Cold War by delving into the newly emerging landscape of Middle East-Latin American relations of this period. Informing this investigation of geopolitical power and concomitant South-South dialogues that coalesced as part of that Cold War reality, the dossier brings together work that not only transgresses the typical boundaries between area studies of these regions but also pushes for a departure from the way in which Middle East-Latin American relations have often been relegated to and siloed within specific subfields of historical consideration, such as the study of the migration of Arabic-speaking peoples or the field of international relations. The dossier takes advantage of the ability to present several distinctive case studies in order to raise a challenge to historians of this period to broaden their contextualization of the relations between the two regions and to reposition Middle East-Latin American ties within a more complex historical framework of interaction and exchange.

Keywords: South-South Relations, Cold War, Middle East, Latin America, Historiography, Historical Methodology.

Resumen. - Este dossier aborda algunos de los legados históricos menos explorados de la Guerra Fría al profundizar en la emergencia de una nueva era de las relaciones entre Oriente Medio y América Latina de este periodo. Mediante la difusión de las investigaciones realizadas sobre la implicancia que tuvo el juego de poder geopolítico propio de la Guerra Fría en el impuso de la cooperación sur-sur, en este número se han reunido, además, varios trabajos que no solo transgreden los límites comunes de los estudios de área de estas regiones, sino que también se apartan de los tópicos comunes de las relaciones entre Oriente Medio y América Latina. Por lo general, estos han sido relegados y encasillados en materias tradicionales, tales como el estudio de la migración árabe o de las relaciones internacionales. En este número se hace una clara contribución a la hora de

presentar trabajos que, desde distintas perspectivas, pueden plantear un desafío disciplinar a los historiadores centrados en este periodo, especialmente con vistas a la ampliación de su marco contextual de las relaciones entre las dos regiones, lo cual les permita repositionar los lazos entre Oriente Medio y América Latina dentro de un cuadro histórico más complejo de interacción e intercambio.

Palabras clave: Relaciones Sur-Sur, Guerra Fría, Oriente Medio, América Latina, historiografía, metodología de la historia.

Introduction

Historically, ties between the Middle East and Latin America came in the form of migration circuits and their ensuing diasporic communities, diplomatic overtures, the development of economic networks, and other forms of transregional connection. While traces of these migrations are evident in the earliest colonial documents produced by merchants, travellers, and Iberian interlocutors, these linkages intensified markedly in the last third of the nineteenth century, when migration ballooned not only between the regions, but also on a global scale. It was during this late nineteenth century period up until World War I when massive out-migration from the Ottoman Empire peaked. Primarily leaving from the Syrian region, this large-scale population shift resulted in close to one in five Syrians moving to international destinations by the first decade of the twentieth century. The majority of those who left set sail for destinations in the American hemisphere. Their arrivals coincided temporally with the rise of many liberal Latin American leaders who promoted, to varying degrees of success in implementation, the use of mass migration as a nation-building tool with the potential to industrialize, modernize, and otherwise impact the ethno-racial composition of their populace.

Following the initial migration boom that established lasting ties between Latin America and the places from whence its legions of migrants came, the early decades of the twentieth century saw the growth of Middle Eastern heritage communities throughout the Americas. These were characterized by the continuous movement of people, things, and ideas back and forth between Middle Eastern homelands and host societies. This circulating dynamic has led some scholars to frame these early Latin American-Middle East relations built on migratory links as “diasporic” connections. Others construe the rise of traveling politics, ideologies, capital, and cultural forms as a “transnational public sphere” that linked these regions of the Global South with growing

intensity since the late-nineteenth century.¹ Regardless of how recognized, through the first half of the twentieth century, Middle Eastern peoples, cultures, and languages were increasingly present in Latin American societies throughout Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean, and South America. While the principal aggregations of Middle Eastern migrant or heritage communities coincided with major migration ports such as Buenos Aires or São Paulo, populations of significant size developed in many areas well removed from these hubs. Testament to this extensive demographic spread is evident in the range of “guías sociales” and “guías de comercio” so commonly produced by immigrant collectivities throughout Latin America in the first half of the twentieth century. The surviving archival sources that resulted from this common practice preserve the names, locations, and trades of thousands of Middle Eastern migrants who built lives in rural areas from the southern reaches of Patagonia, to rural Mexican and Central American towns. Though decidedly geographically remote, the inhabitants of these areas were often intimately informed of, and keyed into, community building, philanthropic efforts, and political projects that unfolded in the diaspora and often stretched back across the Atlantic to Middle Eastern homelands.² In sum, the formation of early twentieth century migratory links between Latin America and the Middle East produced the bedrock upon which several other layers of relations came to be laid in subsequent decades.

By mid-century, several more of these layered relations were formed alongside shifting geopolitical landscapes in the Middle East following the First and Second World Wars. Debates about the establishment of European Mandate powers in the post-Ottoman Middle East reverberated in the diasporic press. Meanwhile, rising discourses and ideologies related to questions of Arab nationalism, Pan-Arabism, conceptual frameworks for citizenship, and arguments for independence also found productive sounding boards in the Middle East’s diasporic populations scattered across several continents.³

While these political, intellectual, and cultural currents built on the connective migratory ties between Latin America and the Middle East in the first several decades of the twentieth century, it was the flashpoint of World War II and its immediate aftermath that brought the Middle East into sharper

¹ Reem Bailony, “Transnationalism and the Syrian Migrant Public. The Case of the 1925 Syrian Revolt”: *Mashriq & Mahjar. Journal of Middle East & North African Migration Studies*, 1: 1 (2013), p. 8-29.

² Lily Pearl Balloffet, “From the Pampa to the Mashriq. Arab-Argentine Philanthropy Networks”: *Mashriq & Mahjar. Journal of Middle East & North African Migration Studies* 4: 1 (2017), p. 4-28.

³ Lauren Banko, *The Invention of Palestinian Citizenship. 1918-1947*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

relief as a referent and point of interest for much broader sectors of Latin American societies. After all, World War II represented an opportunity for actors across the Global South to reimagine their place in a new, post-war world order. In this vein, the 1947 Partition of Palestine engendered several new connections between Latin America and the Middle East in the realm of both migratory links, and connected imaginaries of the Third World. The exodus of some 700,000 Palestinian Arabs in the Nakba of 1948 contributed to a spike in Palestinian populations in Latin American countries, most notably Chile. In the decades that followed, Palestine became a referent for broader sectors of the rising Latin American New Left in the 1960s and 70s.⁴

While the place of Palestine as a focal point for the post-Cuban Revolution Left is slowly coming into better focus thanks to recent scholarship, there are yet more connections, some of which are topics of study in this dossier, whose nuances bear fleshing out. Six years after the events of 1947, the CIA-backed pair of coups in Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954) were clearly seen by many Latin Americans as a sign that together with the Middle East, their regions were in the crosshairs of McCarthyist political agendas.⁵ Other conflicts like the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis drew Latin Americans to further articulate the parallels that they observed in the neocolonial incursions made by capitalist corporations backed by U.S. and European governments who encroached on American, Middle Eastern, and North African economies.⁶ The 1950s were only the start to what became several decades of violent interventions as the Cold War played out on Global South battlegrounds. Throughout this period, Latin American and Middle Eastern actors found repeated opportunities to understand local realities through the lens of connected resistance to the rapidly polarizing world around them. In other cases, political connections arose between right-wing authoritarian governments, such as those in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Nicaragua, and governments in the Middle East, such as Iraq, Iran under the Shah, or Israel, and especially in the supply and trade of weapons and other military equipment that circulated through the

⁴ Jessica Stites Mor, "The Question of Palestine in the Argentine Political Imaginary. Anti-Imperialist Thought from Cold War to Neoliberal Order": *Journal of Latin American and Iberian Research*, 20: 2 (2014), p. 183-197.

⁵ This comparison continued well into the 1980s, as Greg Grandin has documented in *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*, New York: Owl Books, 2007, p. 234.

⁶ Lily Pearl Balloffet, "Argentine and Egyptian History Entangled. From Perón to Nasser": *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 50: 3 (2018). Stacy Fahrenthold, "Transnational Modes and Media. The Syrian Press in the Mahjar and Emigrant Activism during World War I": *Mashriq & Mahjar. Journal of Middle East & North African Migration Studies*, 1: 1 (2013), p. 30-54.

Global South during the Cold War.⁷ After all, South-South relations were not solely the purview of the Left. In any case, the connections that defined scenarios of both Right and Left Cold War ties involved the transregional travel of people, things, and ideas between Latin America and the Middle East throughout this era. Whether these mobilities came in the form of new trade relationships, artistic collaborations in the realms of film and cultural production, or the enthusiastic translation of political ideologies, they in turn shaped the relations between these geographies in lasting ways. And this is, precisely, the theme that this dossier takes on as a central focus.

Historiography

Significant interest in attention to the history between these two regions among historians of Latin America emerged in the 1990s, first as a phenomenon of “mahjar” history, or history of the human and physical geographies of Middle Eastern emigration and settlement – often translated as “diaspora” in English. In its first phase, mahjar history was characterized by a desire to map the social history of Latin American populations in a more inclusive way, by bringing much needed historical attention to Arabic speakers in heritage communities as ethnic and religious minorities. Works like that of Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey Lesser compared the experiences of both Arab and Jewish settlers in Latin America, considering the continuities between religious practices between worlds “old and new.”⁸ Some of this work highlighted national identity formation and strategies of integration of immigrants within new national identities in the Americas, while identifying geographic patterns of difference and preoccupations with spatial proximity to communities of origin.⁹ Other

⁷ Heeraldo Muñoz, *Las Relaciones Exteriores del Gobierno Militar Chileno*, Santiago de Chile: Prospel-CERC, Las Ediciones del Ornitorninco, 1986.

⁸ Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey Lesser (eds.), *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America. Images and Realities*, London: Routledge, 1998.

⁹ See for example: Albert Hourani / Nadim Shehadi (eds.), *The Lebanese in the World*, London: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1992; Jeffrey Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity. Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999; Jonathan Tofik Karam, *Another Arabesque. Syrian-Lebanese Ethnicity in Neoliberal Brazil*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2007; and Abdeluahid Akmir, *Los árabes en Argentina*, Rosario: Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Rosario, 2011. See also the work of art historians and others interested in traces of Islamic art and culture in the Americas such as Rafael López Guzmán / Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales (eds.), *Alhambras. Arquitectura neoárabe en Latinoamérica*, Granada: Almed, 2016; Lorenzo Agar Corbinos / Raymundo Kabchi (eds.), *El mundo árabe y América Latina*, New York: Ediciones UNESCO, 1997. See

works considered adaptation of religious practice to local circumstance, characteristics of evolving linguistic vernaculars, and anxieties of acculturation. Akram Khater's work *Inventing Home* stands out among these works, as it moved beyond American geographies of the mahjar and spoke to questions of how Lebanese immigrants confronted the pressures of the advance of global capitalism and the desire to return to the Middle East. This work examined the way in which Lebanese migrants returning from the Americas helped to reshape the modern Lebanese state, and was one of the first to consider the experience of migration as multidirectional.¹⁰ Studies such as this represented the arrival of key perspectives and multi-site archival methodologies associated with the transnational turn to the field of mahjar historiography.

The second phase of mahjar historiography, beginning in the past 10 years, includes the work of scholars like Jonathan Tofik Karam, Camila Pastor, Silvia Ferreira, and Stacy Fahrenthold¹¹ whose work responded to a call to a new generation of Middle East and North Africa migration scholars to begin to think about how they might strive to see the "Middle East in the world, and the world in the Middle East."¹² Silvia Ferreira, in "Excavating Mashriqi Roots in the Mahjar," examines the literary history that brings to light cultural circulations and exchanges between the two regions and implications for agricultural practices in Brazil.¹³ This new wave of scholarship not only links mahjar geographies but also more substantively connects distinct mahjar histories within the region and weaves them more meaningfully into other historiographical subfields. These newer works also utilize sociological categories such as gender, class status, sexuality, and religious systems of

also Abdeluahed Akmir (ed.), *Los árabes en América Latina. Historia de una emigración*, Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2009.

¹⁰ Akram F. Khater, *Inventing Home. Emigration, Gender and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.

¹¹ See John Tofik Karam, "I, Too, Am the Americas. Arabs in the Redrawing of Area and Ethnic Studies": *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 37: 3 (2018), p. 93-101; Camila Pastor, *The Mexican Mahjar. Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2017; Stacy D. Fahrenthold, *Between the Ottomans and the Entente. The First World War in the Syrian and Lebanese Diaspora, 1908-1925*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. See also Steven Hyland, Jr., *More Argentine than You. Arabic-Speaking Immigrants in Argentina*, Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2017 and Raanan Rein / Stefan Rinke / Nadia Zysman (eds.), *The New Ethnic Studies in Latin America*, Boston, MA: Brill, 2017.

¹² Andrew Arsan / Jonathan Tofik Karam / Akram Khater, "On Forgotten Shores. Migration in Middle East Studies and the Middle East in Migration Studies": *Mashriq & Mahjar. Journal of Middle East & North African Migration Studies*, 1: 1 (2015), p. 1-7.

¹³ Silvia C. Ferreira, "Excavating Mashriqi Roots in the Mahjar. Agriculture and Assimilation in Raduan Nassar's *Lavoura arcaica*": *Mashriq & Mahjar. Journal of Middle East & North African Migration Studies*, 2: 2 (2015), p. 13-27.

belief as lenses through which to explore migratory processes and to understand how migration might elucidate Latin American-Middle Eastern ties. Devi Mays and Aisha Kahn, for instance, have drawn out critical implications of migration history for gender relations and representative democracy for Muslim minorities in the Americas.¹⁴ These are critical new frontiers in the study of mahjar demographics, histories, and cultures.

Beyond scholarship on the mahjar, a variety of scholars have taken an interest in Middle East-Latin American ties from a diplomatic history perspective.¹⁵ Paul Amar's collection on the Middle East and Brazil, for

¹⁴ Maria del Mar Logroño Narbona / Paulo G. Pinto / John Tofik Karam (eds.), *Crescent over Another Horizon. Islam in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latino USA*, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2015, Aisha Khan (ed.), *Islam and the Americas*, Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2015 and Devi Mays, "'I Killed Her because I Loved Her too Much': Gender and Violence in the 20th Century Sephardi Diaspora": *Mashriq & Mahjar. Journal of Middle East & North African Migration Studies*, 2: 1 (2014), p. 4-28.

¹⁵ During the Cold War, particularly during the late 1970s to the early 1980s, a handful of publications reported on Cuba's connection with Arab left organizations. Most of these publications were written by political scientists and journalists, such as exiled Cubans and U.S. scholars, some connected to institutions of the state or policymaking, which heavily criticized Cuba's foreign connections with the left organizations of the Arab World, though these sources were rarely based on Latin American or Middle Eastern historical documents as primary sources. These include: *Cuba Annual Report*, U.S. Office of Research and Policy, Radio Martí Project, New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1988; Wayne S. Smith, *Castro's Cuba. Soviet Partner or Nonaligned*, Washington, D.C.: Latin American Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1984; Jane Franklin, *Cuban Foreign Relations. A Chronology 1958-1982*, New York: Center for Cuban Studies, 1984; Cole Blasier / Carmelo Mesa-Lago, *Cuba in the World*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979; Martin Weinstein, *Revolutionary Cuba in the World Arena*, Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1979; David Kopilow, *Castro, Israel and the P.L.O.*, Washington, D.C.: Cuban American National Foundation, 1985; and Juan Benemelis, *Castro subversión y terrorismo en Africa*, Madrid: San Martín, 1988. This tradition continued as political science scholars expanded their scope of research by the late 1980s, resulting in works such as Roger Fontaine, *Terrorism. The Cuba Connection*, New York: C. Russak, 1988; Damián J. Fernández (ed.), *Central America and the Middle East. The Internationalism of the Crises*, Miami: Florida International University Press, 1990; Juan Bemeleis, *Las guerras secretas de Fidel Castro*, Coral Gables: Grupo de Apoyo a la Disidencia, 2003; Esteban Beruvides, *Cuba. Los crímenes impunes de Fidel Castro*, Miami: Colonial Press International, 1999; Enrique Ros, *Cubanos combatientes, peleando en distintos frentes*, Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1998; and Saïd Bouamama, *La Tricontinentale. Les peuples du tiers-monde à l'assaut du ciel*, Paris: Éditions du CETIM, 2016. In Cuba, beginning in 1979, the Centro de Estudios de África y Medio Oriente (CEAMO) operated and worked on reports, and beginning in 1983 published *Revista de África y Medio Oriente (RAMO)*, which included contributions on Cuba-Middle East relations. See: <https://www.nodo50.org/ceamo/> [12-09-2019]. Journals such as *Estudios y Compilaciones*; y *Enfoques* also occasionally published articles on Cuba and its foreign policy, though both shut down in the "special period" of the 1990s. Miguel D'Estéfano

instance, brings the “Global South” lens on Middle East-Latin American relations to examine how this framework of geostrategic positioning has resulted in various forms of political and social change.¹⁶ This is an important addition that builds on more traditional studies of diplomacy, including work by Hilda Varela and Indira Iasel Sánchez on high level interactions between the Mexican state and its counterparts in the Middle East.¹⁷ Scholars like Piero Gleijeses, Vijay Prashad, and Roger Faligot examine the work of Latin American countries within strategies of global resistance to the pressures of the Cold War and imperialism, such as participation within the Non-Aligned Movement or Cuban intervention in Africa.¹⁸ Recent comparative analyses of political and economic systems have given rise to some scholarship on the advance of free-market states, corporatism, and the rise of dictatorship.¹⁹ Despite the geographic range of these studies, they tend to maintain a critical distance from the work of social historians or those that study cultural forms. In sum, the combination of these disparate methodological and disciplinary approaches to linking histories and realities of the Middle East and Latin America have combined to entangle, and shape the contours of, scholarly understandings of these regions of the Global South.

Pisani also published *Política exterior de la revolución Cubana*, Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2002. And most recently, Elena Fiddian-Qasbiyeh / Patricia Daley (eds.), published the *Routledge Handbook of South-South Relations*, New York: Routledge, 2019, which includes several relevant chapters.

¹⁶ Paul Amar (ed.), *The Middle East and Brazil. Perspectives on the New Global South*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014.

¹⁷ Hilda Varela / Indira Iasel Sánchez, “África y Medio Oriente”: M. de Vega (ed.), *Historia de las relaciones internacionales de México, 1821-2010*, México, SRE, vol. 7, 2006, p. 245-250.

¹⁸ Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions. Havana, Washington and Africa 1959-1976*, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003; Roger Faligot, *Tricontinental. Quand Che Guevara, Ben Barka, Castro et Hồ Chí Minh préparaient la révolution mondiale, 1964-1968*, Paris: Cahiers libres - Découverte, 2013; and Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations*, New York: The New Press, 2007. See also: Damián J. Fernández, *Cuba’s Foreign Policy in the Middle East*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1988; Federico Vélaz, *Latin American Revolutionaries and the Arab World. From the Suez Canal to the Arab Spring*, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2016; Marta Tawil (ed.), *Latin American Foreign Policies towards the Middle East. Actors, Contexts, and Trends*, London: Palgrave, 2016; and Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis. Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

¹⁹ Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago. Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013; Hishaam Aidi, *Redeploying the State. Corporatism, Neoliberalism, and Coalition Politics*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; and Alejandro Velasco / Omar Dahi / Sinan Antoon // Laura Weiss (eds.), “The Latin East. New Perspectives on Latin America-Middle East Ties”: *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Special Issue, 50: 1 (2018).

Themes, Methodologies, and Note on Sources

This dossier had taken on the task of articulating a way forward within scholarship on this period between the Middle East and Latin America, in the hopes that with some encouragement the field will continue to grow, despite structural limitations, beyond the confines of international relations and migration history. Camacho Padilla considers reactions in Latin America to the Iranian Revolution and local interpretations of and sympathy for ousted Shah Reza Pahlevi. Despite notable support for the Shah's limited projects of socialism and attempts to modernize Iran's relationship to the global economy, he looks at the trajectory of the Shah's exile and the difficulties of managing local perceptions of Latin American diplomacy, particularly in Mexico, where competing projects of post-revolutionary state making ran directly against Cold War tensions with the United States. Stites Mor's contribution considers the means by which Cuba utilized its international solidarity projects to shape perceptions of the Cuban revolution among Non-Aligned countries, particularly with respect to their collective action at the United Nations. Both authors highlight the importance of external perceptions of political change and leadership to defining the objectives of policy makers in strategic cross-regional interactions. Both of these authors also highlight the nuanced role of Latin America in shaping perceptions of what national liberation meant between the success of the Algerian and Cuban revolutions and the early 1970s, as intra-regional conflicts began to complicate Middle Eastern and African designs for independent post-colonial futures.

Both Stites Mor and Elmaleh begin their discussion from the analytical framing of diasporic politics, but both attempt to push beyond the category to better integrate the interconnectedness of experience of diaspora within larger trans-local political and social histories. Elmaleh offers a new way to think about geographies, given the limitations of transnational history to effectively move beyond the purview of nation-states or ethnic nationhood, by examining spaces of constant border crossing and multiple, overlapping regimes of frontier regulation. As in Stites Mor's consideration of Cuban leftists in solidarity with national liberation in Africa and Palestinian nationalism, politicized social networks become the primary vehicle for interrogating political mobilization. Elmaleh's contribution, like that of author Jozami, also confronts the complicated nature of understanding anti-Semitism within these frames. Elmaleh considers anti-Sunni and anti-Shiite sentiments which complicated projects of creating common ground for Islamists in the Triple Frontier region. He argues that internal "utopian" notions of co-existence confronted myths of struggle imported from the Middle East, class conflict,

competing models of socialism, and local limitations to comfortable cohabitation. Likewise, Jozami considers the way that conflict in the Middle East, specifically the Six-Day War between Israel, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan revealed tensions between different Argentine leftist parties as they attempted to define positions to distinguish their own politics from each other. Jozami considers the way in which Jewish ethnicity became a critical lens through which leftists began to both identify and express their positionality towards both Zionism, tricontinentalist organizing on behalf of Palestine, anti-Semitism, and the war itself.

Each piece within this dossier also speaks to the centrality of modes of transnational communication between the Middle East and Latin America. Jozami highlights the political responses penned by political groups and circulated in partisan publications as means to inform responsible actions and to craft collective responses to calls for solidarity. Camacho Padilla highlights the relationships crafted by high-level statesmen and diplomats and the consequences such communications had on the reception of the Ayatollah's ascent to power. He also demonstrates the way in which public perception influenced relations between oil producing countries between the two regions. Perception is also critical in Stites Mor's contribution, which examines the production of visual culture as a means of communicating across geographical and linguistic difference for the purpose of elevating certain principles of South-South solidarity over others. Elmaleh, in contrast, suggests that trade itself could be considered a practical mode of communication, informing everyday life and also notions of citizenship. In each of these individual case studies, the question of sources and interpretation arise, in particular with respect to the means by which historical actors were able to access and be informed by distant events and media. This reality is indicative of the methodological challenges presented by transnational historical research of this nature. Together these four case studies advance an approach to Middle East-Latin American history that integrates transnational and national histories, refusing to separate the specificities of diasporic politics from the cross-regional projects within which they are implicated.

Conducting research on Middle East-Latin American relations means necessarily confronting a series of challenges. There are several factors that can make this an arduous topic to tackle logistically in light of geography, traditional area-studies-based structures of research funding, and a host of other factors. First, the need to traverse long distances both between and within these two regions has on its own proven daunting enough to dissuade some researchers from seeing their projects through. Inter- as well as intra-regional travel can be difficult, costly, and burdened by evolving regimes of mobility

control within and between research sites. As a natural result of this challenge, many investigations end up taking the shape of case studies of a single research site. Sometimes, limitations also involve access to primary sources. In the studies presented here, much like the broader field of scholarship on Middle East-Latin American relations, the mere existence of primary sources is no guarantee of gaining requisite layers of bureaucratic approval necessary for access. Some researchers have mitigated these challenges by studying more easily accessible sources that have the ability to shed light on corresponding threads of these South-South relations, such as political and economic reports, qualitative and quantitative reports by supranational organizations on specific regions or topics, such as migration and trade, and, as of the late-1990s, public-domain data available on the internet. For historians, however, much needed archival material remains bound up in local intricacies and institutional barriers. Scholars should be tasked with identifying and making known what new materials are available to their fields in order to provide new paths of entry for research and to open discussions to new ways of understanding. This dossier speaks to this issue by including below a review of the current status of source material, which also serves to foreground the research and methodological approaches that follows in individual contributions, adding detail to the physical labor of the authors in bringing new material to light.

The fact that Latin America has traditionally not been a geographic priority area for study in most Middle Eastern institutions means that potential archival source material related to Latin American relations, but housed in Middle Eastern archives, has often been under-utilized and under-analyzed. Though often complicated, there nevertheless exist promising untapped sources in several national archives, and, among other institutions, the holdings of ministries of foreign affairs. Additional challenges presented by source material on this topic include the plurality of languages involved in transregional Middle East-Latin American relations research. This provides an additional layer of obstacles in terms of the language training and preparation needed for the execution of a research plan that could potentially involve many languages and alphabets. Language capacitation as a barrier to transregional research is a potential obstacle that impacts researchers in both the Americas and the Middle East, but the common lack of academic departments or institutes specialized in Latin American studies at Middle Eastern institutions, with notable exceptions of Turkey, Iran, and Israel, poses additional challenges to Middle East-based researchers with potential interest in these topics.

Nevertheless, the sensitivity of these subjects, and the unresolved conflict and political instabilities caused by multiple factors that impacts many of these state institutions and archives, represent significant constraints that limit access

for researchers. Luckily for some scholars, they have been able to utilize more accessible archival holdings from the Mandate era, such as the French Centre d'Archives diplomatiques of Nantes, or La Courneuve.²⁰ Additional European foreign ministry holdings in Spain, Germany, and Italy have also yielded fruit for researchers. Intelligence agencies also possess potentially useful archival materials, for example the U.S. National Security Archive or Syria's General Intelligence Directorate, on the historical trajectories of and links between Latin American and Middle Eastern revolutionary organizations of the Cold War era. These include outreach done by groups such as Argentina's Montoneros and Nicaragua's Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional. In a similar vein of intelligence-related archival sources, Eastern bloc countries during the Cold War invested great attention in the connections between Global South regions like Latin America and the Middle East, and records of transregional relations can be found in Belgrade, Berlin, Prague, Bucharest, and Budapest. Similarly, Moscow's archives of the Soviet era contain vast collections of fascinating material in Spanish - particularly holdings of the Communist Party and the archives of the Comintern - but many holdings have yet to be made public.

Private archives often maintain smaller collections of locally relevant materials of interest to the constituents of a particular cultural association, sports club, or religious institution. These sites have provided rich materials that bolster much of the scholarship conducted to date on the history of the mahjar in the Americas. In some cases, the documentary collections of mahjar periodicals produced in Latin America, for example, are more extensive in the Middle East than in the Latin American sites where these sources were originally produced from the late nineteenth through early twentieth century. This is certainly the case, for example, the collections of early twentieth-century Argentine mahjar periodicals held by the American University of Beirut collections, which are far more complete than those at the Biblioteca Nacional of Buenos Aires. Despite being often incomplete, the holdings of these types of sources in Latin American archives and repositories in general tend to be much more accessible to prospective investigators. Ministries of foreign affairs in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico have already provided valuable resources to many scholars, even if past moments of political instability, or present realities of corruption, can lead to disorganization and the disappearance of relevant documents. Despite the wider availability of archival holdings in Latin American public institutions and private organizations, some of the most promising materials are still restricted. For example, countries with stronger historical links to political

²⁰ See Hyland, *More Argentine* and Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis*.

revolutionary organizations, such as Cuba and Nicaragua, still have many relevant documents classified. Documents from the Cuban intelligence service fall under this category, and files from the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs are carefully reviewed by three officials before delivering them to the researcher, and often end up heavily redacted by the time they make their way through this process. These obstacles to research are of course by no means unique to the study of Latin American-Middle East relations, but they have exerted a significant impact on the development of historical analysis of cross-regional exchange over the past decades.

On the opposite end of the accessibility spectrum, however, there are other troves of archival evidence readily available to researchers. These include the historical archive of the Organization of Solidarity of the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL) located in Havana. These archives offer valuable insight into the dynamics of early Cuban contacts with many revolutionary organizations that hailed from the OSPAAAL regions. No other Latin American country had a stronger or more sustained political connection with the Middle East as did Cuba after 1959, not only in terms of military and humanitarian support, but also in regards to medical and technical missions, or in the form of thousands of scholarships offered to Arab youth from Palestine, Western Sahara, Yemen and Dhofar (Oman), among other countries. Relevant documents in relation to these activities are located in the corresponding education, health, and industry archives of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba. Though recent scholarship has started to document the existence of historical solidarity ties between other Latin American countries and the Middle East, key research sites such as the ministries of foreign affairs of Venezuela and Nicaragua do not allow research access at present. The personal artefacts and memoirs of individuals directly engaged in South-South relations during the Cold War period may also offer some additional glimpses into the interconnections of this period.²¹ Overall, the availability of source materials is constantly evolving, as many archives are currently undergoing processes of declassification, and alternative sources such as Wikileaks offer ever-

²¹ The memories of Latin American and Middle Eastern political actors such as Ernesto Cardenal (*La Revolución Perdida*), Sergio Ramírez (*Adiós Muchachos*), Luis Weckmann (*Diario Político*), Jorge G. Castañeda (*Amarres Perros*) Farah Diba (*Memories*), Manucher Farmanfarmaian (*Blood & Oil*), Asadollah Alam (*The Shah and I*) and many others can act as building blocks to help us flesh out the history of how and why people, things, and ideas moved back and forth between these regions during the Cold War. The intervening interests of United States actors in the affairs and political trajectories of Global South nations also resulted in the appearance of Latin American-Middle East ties in the observations of actors such as Jimmy Carter (*Keeping the Faith*), or Hamilton Jordan (*Crisis*) - both of whom provided interesting observations about the exile of the Shah in Mexico and Panama.

expanding documentary resources. Like our understanding of the historical South-South relations that developed between Latin America and the Middle East over the course of the twentieth century, the research landscape for future investigation of these themes is actively evolving.

Meanwhile, this dossier hopes to offer new avenues to scholars interested in exploring this topic, and also advocates for pushing the boundaries of the field through the following means: 1) Prioritizing increasingly collaborative scholarship and developing better means by which to recognize and value collaborative efforts; 2) Exerting active pressure on academic institutions to foster language support and to admit and support international students that intend to study subjects outside of their home region; 3) Recognizing distance and challenges of accessibility as a matter of order and finding a way to productively appreciate these limitations while simultaneously advocating for means to challenge them; 4) Strengthening scholarly ties with professional non-profit organizations in order to be able to create useful infrastructures of research support; and 5) Refusing to reduce relationships across regions to matters of international relations. It is the responsibility of scholars undertaking cross-regional history of this nature to limit any potential romanticising of such exchanges beyond the scope of reasonable measures of understanding. New research following these recommendations might productively be undertaken by a cross-regional collaboration of scholars, a phenomenon that promises to broaden existing, and introduce new, perspectives on both historical and contemporary forms of Middle East-Latin American relations. A shared strategy across institutions and research projects could provide a more solid base upon which the further expansion of Middle East-Latin America research could potentially rely.