

Beside Bandung: Brazil's Relations toward the Arab World

by JOHN TOFIK KARAM | University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign | karam@illinois.edu

In 2005, Brazil hosted the first-ever summit of South American and Arab countries, called the *Cúpula da América do Sul-Países Árabes*, or ASPA in Portuguese. President Luís Inácio “Lula” da Silva inaugurated the summit by declaring that Arab and South American states would together forge “a new international . . . economic geography” and “a world of peace . . . and social justice.” Lula used the keywords from the 1955 Bandung conference of African and Asian leaders, which gave rise to the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), a group of states that claimed to eschew power blocs since the Cold War. But as recently as 2006, Brazil upheld its status as an “observer,” and not member, of the Non-Aligned Movement. Why did Brazil use the language of Bandung in ASPA when it avoided allying with nonaligned states?

Brazil's seemingly paradoxical role in ASPA and NAM makes sense in relation to its “independent foreign policy” initiated in the early 1960s. Since that moment, the Brazilian state cultivated political and commercial ties with nonaligned states in the Arab world at the same time it dodged formal adherence to nonalignment. Brazil's rapprochement toward nonaligned Arab countries and its measured distance from official membership in the Non-Aligned Movement can be most critically understood in three periods: the brief mandate of Jânio Quadros (in 1961), the military dictatorship (from 1964 to 1985), and Lula's two terms (from 2003 to 2010). During these periods, the Brazilian state adopted the rhetoric of, but remained separate from, nonalignment in founding the South America–Arab Countries Summit, revealing the overlapping, and competing, agendas of what is today called the global South.

Third World Solidarity and Brazilian Detachment, 1955–1972

In April 1955, 29 Arab, Asian, and African state representatives convened in the Indonesian capital of Bandung and condemned “colonialism in all of its manifestations.” They released a ten-point declaration that called for noninterference in the internal affairs of African, Arab, and Asian countries. Latin American states were officially absent from this meeting, but historian Jerry Dávila noted that the Brazilian president, Café Filho, sent an “unofficial diplomatic observer” to Bandung while he officially visited Portugal (Dávila 2010a, 142). Although the Brazilian president, speaking in Lisbon, alleged, “We stand by the Portuguese in any part of the world,” his observer at Bandung later reflected that “Brazil had the possibility of becoming one of the great world powers if it could relate well with the new countries of Asia and Africa” (Dávila 2010a, 143). The Brazilian state sided with the former colonial master on international matters but could at least momentarily see in Bandung a future opportunity.

In 1961, the states that attended Bandung as well as others came together to protest or moderate the Cold War in what they denominated the “Non-Aligned Movement” (NAM). Jânio Quadros, Brazil's president, sent observers, not delegates, to the preparatory meeting in Cairo and the inaugural summit in Belgrade.¹ Influenced by Third World leaders, and particularly fond of Egypt's Gamal Abd el Nasser, Quadros had declared what he called Brazil's *Política Externa Independente* (PEI, Independent Foreign Policy). This meant that Quadros not only steered Brazil clear of allying with the United States and USSR but also retained observer status for Brazil in the

nonaligned summit. The diplomats that formulated this foreign policy, however, were distanced from the Brazilian foreign ministry after the military overthrew the successor of Quadros in 1964 and seized control of the state for the next 21 years.

As military rulers sought to realign the country toward Portugal and the United States during the 1960s, Brazil's relations with the Middle East were limited to purchasing petroleum in exchange for coffee. In order to make up for the lopsided balance of payments, two Brazilian business associations headed a 1966 trade mission to Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the United Arab Republic, all of which had adhered to nonalignment. These missions, however, came up short. Only five years later did Petrobrás, Brazil's state-owned oil company, “sign an agreement with Iraq's state oil company to purchase Iraqi oil with Brazilian manufactured goods.” Despite this agreement at this time, however, the Brazilian foreign ministry, called Itamaraty, lacked “serious studies of the economies and commercial structures” of most Arab states (Selcher 1974).

Some six months after the coup d'état, Brazilian military rulers sent an observer to the second nonaligned summit held in Cairo, despite their ostensible break from the foreign policy of their predecessor.² Brazil's observer probably heard Nasser's inaugural speech, which juxtaposed Cold War tensions and a divide between “rich and poor nations.” Though it observed this NAM summit, Brazil and other South American states were negotiating a courtship sparked by the U.S. “Alliance for Progress,” which thinly veiled corporate and anticommunist interests. The point is that the post-1964 Brazilian military regime dovetailed with U.S. foreign policy against communism, and against Cuba, at the same time that it maintained a distant

tie with nonaligned and seemingly socialist-leaning countries in and beyond the Arab world.

Close to the United States and Portugal in world affairs, this Brazilian regime began to rethink its stance toward the Middle East. Take for instance Brazil's minister of foreign relations, José Magalhães Pinto. Though he supported Brazil's abstention in a vote on an unsuccessful proposal to condemn Israel after the June 1967 war, Magalhães Pinto took the podium at a Special Emergency Session of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly.³ He began his speech by stating that Brazil is "a country linked to Arabs and Jews by ties of blood, friendship and culture" and called for "a peaceful solution to the crisis which has brought suffering and anguish to thousands and thousands of Brazilian homes of Jewish and Arab descent." Apparently connected to two peoples at war, Brazil's foreign minister outlined steps for Israeli and Arab states to achieve a "peaceful solution," not unlike other moderate UN positions. What was different about the minister's public stance was that it referenced the myth of Brazil as a model of ethnic diversity in order to exercise what another official later called "equidistance" in Middle East affairs.⁴ By 1972, this alleged equidistance was again used by Itamaraty to renew commercial relations with Iraq, a nonaligned member state, despite the boycott of multinational oil companies after the nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company (Vizentini 2004, 337).

Brazilian Rapprochement toward Africans and Arabs, 1973–1989

With annual growth rates above 10 percent in the early 1970s, Itamaraty sought to open Africa for the exportation of Brazilian

manufacturers and to solidify ties with Arab countries that supplied oil for industrial expansion at home, as insightfully argued by Dávila. Serving as foreign minister during the term of Emílio Médici (1969–1974), Mário Gibson Barboza was charged with advancing such interests (Dávila 2010b, 141–168). After visits to West and East Africa, the Brazilian foreign minister traveled to separately meet with Anwar Sadat and Golda Meir in early 1973. The newsweekly *Veja* represented Gibson Barboza as receiving "goodwill" on both "Arab and Israeli sides," advancing deals between Petrobrás and the Egyptian state as well as agreeing to agricultural and military technology exchanges with Israel.⁵ Later that same year, though, Brazil's novel rapprochement toward Africans and Arabs would be tested.

In September 1973, Brazil again sent an observer to the Fourth Summit of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Algiers. This meeting marked a "growing Arab-African alliance,"⁶ which was felt after the October 1973 War between Israeli and Arab states. At this time, "numerous African states . . . broke off relations with Israel," and not long after they joined the oil embargo declared by the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC). Subsequently, African leaders petitioned OAPEC to adhere to their boycott of Portugal due to its continued possession of colonies on the continent. According to Dávila, Gibson Barboza feared that "African states" would ask Arab "oil producers to extend the boycott . . . to include countries they believe have supported the government in Lisbon, either directly or indirectly" (Dávila 2010b, 169). Although Brazil "narrowly escaped the embargo," its foreign policy began to take seriously such pressures exerted by nonaligned African and Arab powers (Dávila 2010b, 37). During the early 1970s,

this change was palpable in Itamaraty's distancing Brazil from Portugal and in stances that apparently diverged from "equidistance" toward the Arab-Israeli conflict.

One of the most striking moments of this shift is Brazil's support of the UN Resolution 3379, "Zionism is racism," in 1975. The proposal was approved with 72 votes in favor, most coming from states linked to the Non-Aligned Movement. Jeffrey Lesser and Jerry Dávila (2012) demonstrated that Brazilian statesmen supported this position not because of their country's oil interests, as widely assumed by pundits and scholars today, but rather due to Brazil's mythic self-image as a racial democracy and self-proclaimed leadership role for Africa. Indeed, in later UN legislation and voting, Brazil could hardly be called pro-Palestinian, not only refusing to cast a vote regarding the proposal that would grant status to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at the UN, but also being absent during the unsuccessful vote to create a Palestinian state. Accordingly, Brazil's support of UN Resolution 3379, which discredited Israel in 1975, must be viewed in terms of its own plan for ever-widening global clout through closer ties with not only the Arab world but also African states, which were connected in a growing Non-Alignment Movement.

Begun by Ernesto Geisel (1974–1979) and renewed by João Figueiredo (1979–1985), Brazil's political opening led to the return of civilian rule in 1985 and presidential elections in 1989. But "the main line of Brazilian foreign policy," writes Shiguenoli Miyamoto (2000, 125), "was marked by a continuity with the developmentalist policy that characterized the last two military leaders." This continuity can be seen in Brazil's ties with two nonaligned Arab

powers, Iraq and Palestine. First announced by Brazilian military authorities during the visit of an Iraqi official in late 1979, the opening of a PLO office in Brasília came to fruition on the eve of the return to civilian rule. The intermediary that convinced then military rulers in Brasília to approve of a PLO office, the Iraq National Oil Company, was alleged to have only renewed the contract with Brazil's state-owned oil company in exchange for its support of Arab world causes (Vizentini 2004, 333–334). Without major breaks, the first civilian president, José Sarney (1985–1989), continued to recognize the PLO as a legitimate actor at the same time his administration carried out “systematic planning” for Brazil to operate in the Iraqi market (Fares 2007).

As they engaged Arab states, military and civilian leaders renewed Brazil's status as an “observer” in nonaligned summits in Havana (1979), Delhi (1983), Harare (1986), and Belgrade (1989). In the 1980s, nonaligned members criticized the structures that saddled them with foreign debts. Growing since the last decade of the military regime, Brazil's indebtedness, which led to a moratorium declared by civilian leaders in 1987, could have been reason to officially adhere to nonalignment. But Brazil remained an observer, a decision endorsed by Marcos de Azambuja, who served as the military government's observer at the 1983 Delhi summit and general secretary of Itamaraty after the first president was democratically elected in 1989. He remembered that, in Delhi, India's soon-to-be prime minister remarked that Brazil needed to “make up our minds and enter as full members of the Movement.” Azambuja responded that “we would continue to be just *founding observers* of the non-aligned” (Azambuja 2011). Whether military or civilian, the

Brazilian state remained beside, but not in, the Non-Aligned Movement.

Brazilian Domestic Politics and the Birth of ASPA, 1989–2011

In 1989, Lula unsuccessfully ran against Fernando Collor de Mello (1989–1992) in the second round of the Brazilian presidential election. Lula's political trajectory was marked by private and public acts of solidarity with Arab world causes, namely, the Palestinian national struggle. In 1982, the Workers' Party (PT) published Lula's own letter to Yasser Arafat in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon that same year. In writing to the PLO leader, Lula expressed “indignation” and his “desire to transmit to you, in my name and in the name of the Workers' Party, our total and unwavering solidarity,” concluding that he was “ready to go to Beirut now to be a witness” of the atrocities against “the Arab peoples in Lebanon.”⁷ In the lead-up to the 1989 elections, Lula's position diverged from Collor's, who voiced his opposition to a Palestinian state and the PLO office in Brazil.⁸ Though the question of Palestine was not a major issue, this contrast between Lula and Collor show that the PT was committed to Arab liberationist movements even before the dawn of democratic rule in Brazil.

Again in 1993, Lula unsuccessfully ran for the presidency against Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC, 1994–2002). During Yasser Arafat's first and only visit to Brazil shortly thereafter, FHC carefully spoke about “collaborating” with Palestinians in agricultural, health, and sewage matters, while Lula declared that Brazil should officially recognize the state of Palestine, even before a settlement with Israel (Simões and Fontenelle 1995). FHC's moderate

posture toward Arafat was repeated in the 1995 nonaligned summit in Cartagena de Indias. FHC sent his vice president, Marco Maciel (1995, 191–194), who praised the movement's “nonsubordination” to world powers, defended an “open, multilateral commercial system,” and concluded that “Brazil feels privileged in being able to participate as an Observer Country in one more nonaligned conference.” Arafat also traveled to the Colombian port city, after his visit to Brazil, where he was congratulated for the Oslo accords. Brazil's vice president echoed this moderate embrace, stating that “lasting peace” is the “fundamental condition” for “Palestinian self-determination.” Like his military and civilian predecessors, FHC continued to observe the nonaligned movement and carry out its own bilateral interests with Israel and Palestinians, respectively.

In the 2002 Brazilian elections, Lula ran for the presidency, and in this fourth consecutive attempt, he won. Amid growing criticisms of his complicity with FHC's liberal economics, in late 2003, Lula departed on a nine-day diplomatic and business mission to Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates, all members of the Non-Aligned Movement. Accompanied by 56 government officials and some 150 CEOs, Lula voiced criticisms of Israeli and U.S. occupations of Palestine, the Golan Heights, and Iraq; made declarations of the Palestinian, Syrian, and Iraqi peoples' right to sovereignty; and called for the continued importance of the United Nations. Similar to the Non-Aligned Movement, Lula declared to a few hundred businessmen in Lebanon: “It's about time for us to change the commercial geography of the world, . . . to make the rich countries bend their rules, so that we can compete in equal conditions” (Rodrigues and Marques 2003). Lula's minister of foreign relations, Celso Amorim (2010), repeated these trade

logics in *Valor Econômico* on the first day of their mission abroad. One Brazilian critic astutely observed, “This visit [to the Arab world] has a domestic gain for Lula,” because it gratified the PT “electorate in such a way that he can’t do here” (Motomura and Arbranches 2003). Adhering to liberal economic policies at home, Lula’s mission drew interest from Brazil’s corporate elites and shored up the support of the PT voters with long-standing sentiments of solidarity toward the Arab world.

During his respective meetings with Arab world leaders, Lula proposed the idea of an interregional bloc between América do Sul and Países Árabes (ASPAs). In May 2005, the Brazilian president’s project came to fruition in the inaugural summit in Brasília. It brought together representatives from 12 South American countries and 22 Arab countries. Brazil’s foreign relations minister Amorim declared that the bloc’s aim “to create . . . a new world economic geography” meant that “to go from Brazil to Cairo, you won’t need to pass through Washington and Paris” (Cantanhêde 2005). Framing ASPA in a manner similar to the Non-Aligned Movement that began a half century earlier, Lula referred to the summit’s political significance: “What moves the leaders here today is the necessity to strengthen a political space for the construction of a world of peace, democracy, and social justice.” The first ASPA summit culminated in the “Brasília Declaration,” which gained most attention for affirming “the right of states and peoples to resist foreign occupation.” The inaugural South America–Arab countries summit demonstrated that the regions’ strongest commonality lay in their historic subordination to Europe and the United States, most evident in the questions of Malvinas and Palestine.

Although ASPA is an interregional bloc of 34 South American and Arab states, Brazil possesses greater influence and interest than fellow member states. Brazilian officials hosted or copresided over most of the ministerial-level meetings held by these committees between 2005 and 2009. In an early encounter among cultural ministers, the Brazilian cohost stated, “It is very important that we copresided over the first meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the South America–Arab Countries Summit. . . . Brazil has a singular role in the world. Its cultural and ecological diversity serves as a support base.”⁹ More tellingly, between 2005 and 2009, Brazil accounted for more than 75 percent of the annual trade between South America and the Arab world, which surpassed \$19 billion in 2009.¹⁰ In its first half-decade or so, Brazilian political and economic interests have been far more evident in ASPA. This is to say, asymmetries emerge alongside the solidarities in the so-called global South.

Politically and economically strengthening its relationship to the Arab world, Brazil again retained its official observer status in the 14th Summit of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Cuba in September 2006. Brazil’s observer at the meeting and an architect of ASPA, Celso Amorim, had been a career diplomat who rose through the ranks, first serving as minister of foreign relations during Itamar Franco’s mandate (1993–1995). In a nod to Brazil’s Independent Foreign Policy, Amorim praised “nonalignment” as “an indispensable force for upholding multilateralism,” concluding that Brazil “will continue to work closely with the Non-Aligned Movement to transform this shared vision into reality.” Having used the rhetoric of nonalignment the previous year when he made the somewhat daring statement that ASPA would bypass U.S. and French interests in cultivating Arab–

South American exchanges, Amorim now emphasized Brazil’s position beside, and not in, the Non-Aligned Movement.

Avoiding formal adherence to nonalignment, Lula’s administration was a key player and beneficiary in the second ASPA summit in March 2009, hosted by Qatar. Weeks previously, a Brazilian official remarked that “it was a good time to be a Middle East specialist at Itamaraty, as the region is gaining bureaucratic clout within the ministry,” namely, two Middle East divisions as well as two special envoy positions for ASPA and other matters.¹¹ Their main achievement was the signing of the not yet fulfilled trade accord between Mercosur (the Common Market of the South) and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the economic bloc of Arabian Gulf countries. Two years later, in 2011, the total trade between South America and Arab countries increased by more than 40 percent to \$27.5 billion, three-quarters of which was made up of Brazilian imports and exports.¹² By founding and maintaining ASPA, the Brazilian state ensured its own expansion in the southern and northern reaches of the world economy.

To Be Continued

ASPAs, at least in its first years of existence, is more critically understood not as an alliance among equals with equitable benefits but rather as a Brazilian state project that attracts both South American and Arab states in a world increasingly made up of regional blocs and supranational organizations. ASPA owes as much to the historical solidarity that Lula and the PT have felt toward Arab world struggles as it does to their maintenance of FHC’s liberal economic policies that increased Brazilian exports to so-called

nontraditional markets such as the Middle East. But the larger point is that ASPA needs to be grasped not in relation to any single leader or recent political-economic platform, but rather in terms of the Brazilian state's more than half-century-long strategy to remain beside—neither in nor against—Non-Aligned Summits. Since participating as an observer at the 1955 Bandung meeting, the Brazilian state learned the keywords of nonalignment that it eventually used to frame its own increasingly closer ties with the Middle East, crowned by the América do Sul–Países Árabes Summit. Whether or not this bloc will expand its clout in the world remains to be seen, but what can be said with greater certainty is that Brazil's reach will continue across the global South.

Notes

Previous versions of this essay were presented at the Department of Latin American and Latino Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz, the Latin American Studies Association in Washington, DC, and the Symposium on Middle East–Latin America Relations at the Université Saint-Espirit de Kaslik in Lebanon. For critical support and suggestions for future research, the author wishes to thank Myriem Aboutaher, Gabriela Arredondo, Cecília Baeza, Élodie Brun, Sylvanna Falcón, Adrián Félix, Camilla Fojas, Kevin Funk, Roberto Khatlab, Fernando Leiva, Dan Linger, Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal, Catherine Sue Ramírez, Lourdes Torres, Federico Velez, and Pat Zavella.

¹ “Relatório do ministro João Augusto de Araújo Castro, observador do Brasil à Reunião Preliminar da Conferência de Chefes de Estado e Governo de Países Não-Alinhados, Cairo 5 a 13 junho de 1961,” in *Documentos da Política Externa Independente*, edited by Alvaro da Costa Franco (Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 2007), 94–115.

² “Cairo Conference of Nonaligned Nations,” *International Organization* 19, no. 4 (1965): 1065–1070.

³ UN General Assembly, 5th Emergency Session: 1540th Plenary Meeting, June 28, 1967.

⁴ “A equidistancia hábil,” *Veja*, February 14, 1973, 13–14.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ “The Algiers Summit Conference,” *MERIP*, December 1973, 13–16.

⁷ “Opinião do Leitor,” *Nova Escrita Ensaio*, October 5, 1982, 8–10, 221–222.

⁸ “Árabes estão indignados com Collor de Mello,” *Nosso Tempo*, August 11, 1989, 1, 3; “A questão da Palestina e a sucessão,” *Nosso Tempo*, October 20, 1989, 12.

⁹ “Intercâmbio cultural entre América do Sul e países árabes,” *Carta Maior*, February 6, 2006.

¹⁰ Ministério das Relações Exteriores, *Intercâmbio Comercial América do Sul–Países Árabes e Brasil–Países Árabes* (Brasília: Departamento de Promoção Comercial e Investimentos, 2011).

¹¹ See the Brazilian diplomat's remarks in a U.S. embassy telegram regarding the 2009 South America–Arab Countries Summit: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/03/09BRASILIA391.html> (accessed May 12, 2014).

¹² Ministério das Relações Exteriores, *Intercâmbio Comercial América do Sul–Países Árabes e Brasil–Países Árabes* (Brasília: Departamento de Promoção Comercial e Investimentos, 2011).

References

Amorim, Celso

2010 “Uma agenda de cooperação com o mundo árabe, Valor Econômico, 3 de dezembro de 2003.” *Discursos, palestras e artigos do Canceler Celso Amorim, 2003–2010*, vol. 1, 245–246. Brasília: Ministério das Relações Exteriores.

Azambuja, Marcos de

2011 “A encrenca.” *Piauí* 58 (July).

Cantanhêde, Eliane

2005 “Democracia é algo que existe também no Sul, diz ministro.” *Folha de S. Paulo*, May 16.

Dávila, Jerry

2010a “Entre dois mundos: Gilberto Freyre, a ONU e o apartheid sul-africano.” *História Social* 19: 135–147.

2010b *Hotel Trópico: Brazil and the Challenge of African Decolonization, 1950–1980*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Fares, Seme Taleb

2007 “O pragmatismo do petróleo: As relações entre o Brasil e o Iraque.” *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 50 (2): 129–145.

Lesser, Jeffrey, and Jerry Dávila

2012 “Brasil, Israel y el voto ‘sionismo=racismo’ en las naciones unidas (1975).” In *Más allá del medio oriente: Las diásporas judía y árabe en América Latina*, edited by María José Cano Pérez, Beatriz Molina Rueda, and Raanan Rein, 227–242. Granada: Editorial Universidad de Granada.

Maciel, Marco

1995 “Movimento dos Países Não-Alinhados.” *Resenha de Política Exterior do Brasil* 22 (77): 191–194.

Miyamoto, Shiguenoli

2000 “O Brasil e as negociações multilaterais.” *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 43 (1): 119–137.

Motomura, Marina, and Virgílio Arbranches

2003 “Visita do presidente à Líbia divide especialistas em política externa.” *Folha de S. Paulo*, December 11.

Rodrigues, Fernando, and Alan Marques

2003 “No Líbano, Lula defende uma nova ‘geografia comercial.’” *Folha de S. Paulo*, December 6.

Not Afraid to Make Connections: Edward Said and Salman Rushdie's Latin American Solidarity

by ANNA BERNARD | King's College London | anna.bernard@kcl.ac.uk

Selcher, Wayne

1974 *The Afro-Asian Dimension of Brazilian Foreign Policy, 1956–1972*. Gainesville: University Presses of Florida.

Simões, Rogério, and André Fontenelle

1995 “FHC promete a Arafat ajudar palestinos.” *Folha de S. Paulo*, October 18.

Vizentini, Paulo

2004 *A política externa do regime militar brasileiro: Multilateralização, desenvolvimento e a construção de uma potência média (1964–1985)*, 2nd ed. Porto Alegre: UFRGS Editora. ■

At the start of an essay on the relationship between Latin American literature and comparative literary studies, the Cuban-American scholar Roberto González Echevarría accuses comparative literature of willful ignorance. Among other eminent figures (Tsvetan Todorov, Julia Kristeva, Jonathan Culler, and Fredric Jameson), he implicates Edward Said:

Said can go so far as to write things like “Central and Latin America,” which on the pages of a State Department communiqué would cause wrath as well as mirth, yet feel that he has the authority to criticize Borges and Mario Vargas Llosa. . . . It seems to me that boldness of this kind, which I am sure my truly admired friends Ed and Fred would not dare display when dealing with the French or English, reveals an overseer mentality that is much more of the colonizer than of the would-be decolonizer. (2004, 91–92, citing Said 1989, 215)

While his tone might suggest otherwise, González Echevarría's real targets, it turns out, are other critics—especially Marxist and Third-Worldist critics—of Latin American literature who draw on Said and Jameson's work despite those thinkers' apparent lack of interest in the region (2004, 92–93). Leaving aside the question of whether it is fair to criticize Said for a copyediting error, or indeed for reading Borges and Vargas Llosa in translation, González Echevarría's indignation prompts me to consider how and why Said does invoke Latin America, in the region's admittedly rare appearances in his work, and what it has to do with his far more frequent commentary on Middle East politics and the question of Palestine. Rather than dismissing Said's engagements with Latin America out of hand, it seems more useful to examine the region's

significance for Said, as a site that shares with the Middle East a history of U.S. imperial control as well as a capacity for resistance.

Said mentions Latin America only twice in *Orientalism*, in passing, as part of a list of regions that are subject to U.S. intervention as a matter of policy (2014, 46, 348). But in two essays published in the late 1980s, Latin America's relationship to U.S. neoimperialism is a more central point of reference. These essays appeared at a time when the Iran-Contra affair had made the links between U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and Latin America impossible to ignore. In 1987, Said published an essay pointedly titled “Irangate” in the *London Review of Books* (LRB, notably, a non-American publication). The piece is ostensibly a review of Salman Rushdie's *Jaguar Smile* (1987), which recounts three weeks Rushdie spent with the Sandinistas, and Noam Chomsky's *Turning the Tide: U.S. Intervention in Latin America and the Struggle for Peace* (1985). However, Said spends only the last 1,000 words of an 8,500-word article on these texts. The rest of the essay is an impassioned polemic against the violent and clandestine American interventions that Iran-Contra had exposed, and against the false information about these regions that is regularly conveyed to the American public. Said is particularly scathing of U.S. media representation of the Sandinistas: “To listen to the rhetoric about the dangers of Sandinista government is to have visions of Spanish-speaking terrorists parachuting into Seattle or Atlanta . . . so obscuring of other peoples is the fog of self-confirming cultural power” (1987, para. 26).

Said's aim, however, is not only to describe the structural connections and continuities of U.S. intervention in the two regions. It is also, in his position as the English-speaking