**Intelligence under Dictatorship and Democracy**

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In the twenty first century, there has been a broad doubling of intelligence expenditure across the world. This has taken place alongside various forms of cooperation including notable forms of South-South cooperation. However, the intelligence services of the global South that are at the forefront of contemporary security dilemmas associated with violent conflict, terrorism, and transnational organised crime remain at the periphery of scholarship.

As early as 1988, the pioneering scholar Adda Bozeman wrote a path-breaking essay on the importance of the study of intelligence cultures in non-Western societies. In the same year, Argentine security practitioner and scholar, Eduardo E. Estévez, offered one of the first assessments of intelligence in democratic transitions in Latin America. In 1996, Mexico’s leading expert of intelligence and national security, Sergio Aguayo Quezada, characterised the imbalance as ‘not only absurd, but dangerous’.

Latin America offers fertile ground for the pioneering study of intelligence under dictatorship and democracy. Processes of democratisation from the 1980s resulted in constitutional shifts, legislation to establish national truth commissions, centres of national memory, and judicial proceedings, which have naturally led to the gradual opening of some notable official across all major Latin American states–Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico–and several other countries. More recently, the press has emerged as an an informal oversight mechanism that has led to spying scandals in almost every state in the region as well as the disbanding of the premier intelligence services of Argentina and Colombia.

This paper examines the extent to which intelligence services and their activities are impacted by (un)democratic shifts in political governance. Using an Area Studies approach to the study of intelligence, it explores legacies of authoritarianism in Latin America’s secret services and examines how processes of democratic transitions and democratic consolidation since the 1980s have impacted intelligence practices and oversight in region.