

Vivian Urquidí¹ 

Maria Cristina Cacciamali² 

Bruno Massola Moda³ 

Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil

Gustavo Gutiérrez and Liberation Theology: A Theological and Political Response to the Historical and Social Demands of Latin America

At the beginning of the 21st century, Latin America and the Caribbean experienced a period of significant political transformations – mainly with the arrival of progressive governments – and social advances, which were favored by China's economic expansion. By 2014, extreme poverty in the region had been reduced from 12.2% in 2002 to 7.8% in 2014, and inequality indicators had also decreased (IDB, 2024). Social investment promoted progress mainly in areas such as education, hunger reduction, and improved health and well-being indicators, creating expectations of a new model of social and political development. However, after this short period, which ended in the second decade of the century, the socioeconomic situation in Latin America returned to previous historical levels, with the return of extreme poverty and inequality, indicating that the profound asymmetries in Latin America are not cyclical issues, but are structurally rooted in the social body.

¹ Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of São Paulo and a post-doctorate at the Center for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra. She is an assistant professor at the University of São Paulo in the Public Policy Management Course and in the Latin American Integration and Cultural Studies Postgraduate Programs. Email: vurquidi@usp.br

² Ph.D. in Economics from the University of São Paulo and post-doctorate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of New Mexico. She is a full professor at the University of São Paulo at the Faculty of Economics and Administration and the Postgraduate Program Integration of Latin America. Email: cciamali@uol.com.br

³ Ph.D. student at the Postgraduate Program Integration of Latin America at the University of São Paulo. Email: bruno.moda@hotmail.com.

With more than 180 million people living in poverty – a little over 30% of the region's total population – and more than 80 million in conditions of extreme poverty – i.e., 13% –, according to UN/ECLAC data from 2022, Latin America remains one of the most unequal continents in the world.

Data from April 2024 from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 2024) indicate that the richest 10% of the population accumulate average incomes 12 times higher than those of the poorest 10%. The statistics indicate that, in the decade beginning in 2020, the concentration of wealth increased, as did unequal access, especially for black, indigenous and women, to opportunities and social rights, while redistributive policies were once again restricted due to fiscal adjustment.

Politically, the favorable scenario for progressive governments at the beginning of the 21st century also changed in the second decade. The region experienced a turnaround with the rise of liberal right-wing governments in the economy, many of them with conservative biases in their customs. Emblematic cases, such as Bolsonaro's Brazil, Bukele's El Salvador, Ecuador under Lenín Moreno and, later, Milei's Argentina, reflect this movement that, while seeking to reverse progressive social and economic policies, imposes a new paradigm of fiscal austerity and ultra-liberal reforms. These changes, marked by political and social polarizations, reveal the region's challenges and dilemmas in a context of global uncertainties, such as prolonged armed conflicts, climate crises and the radicalization of the right in Europe and the United States.

Latin American society has responded to the expansion of the right with major mobilizations against liberal reformist forces. This has been seen recently, particularly in Colombia, where social protests – the “Estallido” of 2021 – have created conditions for a political transformation of the country with a fundamental, albeit unstable, shift to the left. In Bolivia, democratic and popular forces defended the return of the MAS government to power

through their votes, ending the 2019 coup. However, internal splits within the governing party strongly contribute to the possibility of a right-wing victory in the 2025 elections.

Social mobilizations in other countries were not enough to sustain progressive transformations: in Chile, the “Estallido Social” failed to guarantee a new Plurinational Constitution, nor in Ecuador and Argentina, where the occupation of the streets by popular urban and rural movements was not able to neutralize the advance of fiscal adjustment and austerity policies. In Brazil, the return of the Workers’ Party to government did not guarantee either the end of political polarizations or the resumption of the social project of the first WP governments. On the contrary, a certain apathy took over the mobilization on the left, while the streets were for a long time taken over by the political action of the right, highly motivated by conservative, antidemocratic, if not fascist values.

In scenarios of demobilization such as those described in the Brazilian case; or of failure of progressive political struggles, as in Ecuador and Peru; in the uncertain horizon of Argentina, Bolivia and even Colombia, it is worth asking how it is possible to motivate and rearticulate the social and political energies of resistance to neoliberalism? How can we promote the construction or defense of alternative projects of progressive hegemony, which characterized the collective action and the great social demonstrations of the 1980s and 1990s, in defense of democracy and for social rights against neoliberal reforms? How can we prevent the frustration of the expectations of economic advancement of the middle and popular sectors from transforming this social base into ideological and political support for the new conservatism and ultraliberalism?

In fact, indignation over poverty and inequality is not a political or epistemic problem of this century. The popular struggle against inequality was already a central issue in the 1960s and 1970s, when, in the absence of democracy, social theorists and left-wing activists – mainly Marxists –

analyzed the situation of misery and marginalization based on concepts such as poverty and social exclusion. At that time, one of the most important Latin American sociologists, the Mexican Pablo González Casanova (2015[1965]), stated, for example, that capitalist relations produced the situation of marginalization, the lack of participation of social segments in the country's growth, and the existence of dual societies – culturally, economically, and politically heterogeneous – that transformed the same nation into distinct worlds, and that colonialism or its contemporary correlate, imperialism, did not occur only on an international scale, but also within the country itself, as an internal colonialism.

In turn, the Brazilian scholar Florestan Fernandes (2015[1970]), another great sociologist of the last century, in a lecture given in 1970, denounced the incompatibility between the democratic beliefs disseminated by the United States in that period and the consequences of its political hegemony in the region, the result of which – intensification of poverty and the revitalization of archaic power structures – favored military dictatorships and authoritarian regimes.

The resurgence of military regimes against parties, unions, universities, and social mobilizations in the 1960s and 1970s resulted in intense political conflicts, generating a series of forms of resistance that manifested themselves mainly through two movements that were not always separate: armed struggle and solidarity actions in grassroots communities, especially grassroots ecclesiastical communities (GECs), as a response to authoritarianism, political repression, and the situation of poverty in urban and rural sectors.

The echoes of the 1959 Cuban Revolution led to the formation of armed resistance throughout the subcontinent. For example, in Brazil, the Popular Revolutionary Vanguard (VPR), the National Liberation Action (NLA), the Communist Party of Brazil (CPofB) and the Brazilian

Revolutionary Communist Party (BRCP) acted clandestinely against the military dictatorship established in 1964; in El Salvador, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMNLF) adopted a rural and urban guerrilla strategy, seeking to undermine the government and its armed forces, while also carrying out direct actions against the large landowners; and in Nicaragua, the Sandinist National Liberation Front (SNLF) defeated the Somoza dynasty, and then had to confront, for a decade, the counterrevolution orchestrated by the United States.

Base Ecclesial Communities played a fundamental role in organizing political resistance, especially in the most impoverished urban and rural areas. With the emergence of Liberation Theology from the 1960s onwards, these communities became a crucial space for critical political formation and the cultural production of pedagogies of resistance against dictatorial and oligopolistic oppression. This progressive segment of the Catholic and Protestant Church, present throughout Latin America, and especially in Peru, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and El Salvador, became a point of support for the poorest and most marginalized, offering a religious interpretation that saw the struggle for social justice and liberation as a Christian duty.

The grassroots Ecclesial Communities were organized around reflection groups, communion groups and solidarity actions in peripheral communities, popular schools and community projects guided by the ethics of consciousness that transforms reality.

It is based on the analysis of this alignment between progressive sectors of the Church and the ideals of political transformation of Latin American social structures on the left that **BJLAS** pays tribute, in the first articles of this issue, to the ethical, Christian and political-intellectual project of Gustavo Gutiérrez (08/06/1928 - 22/10/2024), as a posthumous tribute to one of the greatest exponents of Liberation Theology and one of the main architects of the progressive Catholic reform movement in Latin America.

In this issue, two articles written by profound experts in Liberation Theology and the work of Gustavo Gutiérrez — the Italian-Brazilian Giovanni Semeraro and the Colombians Israel Arturo Orrego-Echeverría and Manuel Leonardo Prada Rodríguez — allow us to understand the origin, circumstances and ethical-political and philosophical depth of the Latin American theological movement, which was embraced by social activists, popular movements, cultural collectives and even Marxist intellectuals in the search for the political and social transformation of the region, based on a mystique of communion with the excluded.

From the Philosophy of Liberation, a project consolidated by Enrique Dussel (1987), we understand that the Paradigm of Liberation – completely different from bourgeois liberalism – resulted from the theological reinterpretation of the book of Exodus – the second book of the Old Testament of the Bible, which tells the story of the people of Israel's escape from slavery in Egypt towards the Promised Land.

Latin America, which in the 1960s and 1970s suffered the height of dictatorships, also experienced the opening of the Catholic Church, triggered by the Second Vatican Council, to play a more participatory role in society and in the political and economic problems of the people. The Council's guidelines were further developed at the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, in Medellín (1968), when several documents were produced, with relevance for those dealing with social justice, peace and the need to rethink poverty and liberation from the oppressive relations imposed by the dictatorship and Latin American oligopolies on the people.

The breach opened by the Latin American Episcopate favored the rereading of the book of Exodus, in which the struggle of the people of God for their liberation allowed theologians to reconstruct their readings on the Latin American reality, to the extent that they assume the commitment to

accompany and learn from the oppressed the real paths and meanings of liberation.

Enrique Dussel (1987, pp. 106 et seq.) highlights several levels in the process of awareness that liberation theologians experienced until they acquired the knowledge and collective experiences capable of allowing their participation in social transformation. In this process, the Church will move from an initial voluntary situation of opting for poverty to a later one in which it will discover not only the material conditions of poverty, but also the real and concrete historical subject: the hungry, the exploited, the oppressed, whom the Church and theologians must serve and take as a reference. The oppressed will no longer be a passive agent of their own liberation, but an active subject of the transformation of their reality.

It is in this hostile and complex scenario of politics and ecclesiastical reforms that the historical dimension of the Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez needs to be understood. We know from Orrego-Echeverría and Prada Rodríguez – who write in this issue – that he was born in Peru and grew up in a middle-class home. His face expressed his indigenous ancestry, reflecting his sensitivity to the peoples oppressed since the colonial experience. An illness that accompanied him since his adolescence also developed the empathy that the future theologian would have for the sick and those marginalized by the benefits of the State, which possibly influenced his training in medicine. Similar to José Carlos Mariátegui, the limits that his body imposed on him led Gutiérrez to become a reader of great Peruvian literature, whose influences are presented by Semeraro in the pages of this issue of **BJLAS**. Ordained a priest, his intellectual and theological training was consolidated through his time at various European institutions, where he also learned about and established dialogues with the experience of the Second Vatican Council.

Gutiérrez's intellectual trajectory and the key aspects of his theology are critically presented in the first two articles of this issue, as we shall see.

We emphasize here that, as Gutiérrez became a global reference for a theology that was critical and challenging of capitalism and opposed to local economic and political powers, he also became a target of the Vatican's severe conservatism, especially during the period in which Joseph Ratzinger was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, before becoming Pope Benedict XVI.

The criticisms of Gutiérrez and Liberation Theology identified the origin of poverty and social and economic inequalities by valuing the class struggle, which the Vatican considered inadequate and even dangerous.

For Gutiérrez,

That struggle [of the lower class] is calling the existing social order into question from the roots up. It insists that the people must come to power if society is to be truly free and egalitarian. In such a society, private ownership of the means of production will be eliminated because it enables a few to expropriate the fruits of labor performed by the many, generates class divisions in society, and permits one class to be exploited by another. In such a reordered society, the social takeover of the means of production will be accompanied by a social takeover of the reins of political power that will ensure people's liberty. (Gutiérrez, 1983, p. 1-2)

Does this approach allow us to conclude that Gutiérrez's theology was imbued with Marxist dogma? Semeraro, and Orrego-Echeverría and Prada Rodríguez offer consistent answers to this question in the first two articles of this issue of the journal. The fact is that, in Ratzinger's view, the Church should focus on spiritual salvation and not get directly involved in political and economic issues, even in the face of the fierce context of military dictatorships and the misery to which the exploited worker is relegated.

In any case, another question that arises is whether the dismantling of the social organization of the resistance and the emergence of evangelical conservatism in politics were the result of the crisis of one of

the most important alternatives for political and social organization in Latin America.

The repression and condemnation of its main representatives, such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, resulted in the Church distancing itself from issues related to social justice and the fight against oppressive structures.

However, Giovanni Semeraro believes that, by changing the paradigm of liberation for the project of hegemonic construction through political parties, over the last few decades,

“electoral concerns and concentration in parties, the professionalization of politics and the expenditure of energy in conquering government power ended up emptying the spaces dedicated to popular mobilization and the construction of hegemony in the various fields of culture and civil society” (SEMERARO, 2007, p. 102, free translation).

The absence of ecclesiastical actions in the field of Liberation Theology should, in fact, be seen as one of the factors, among others, that contributed to the dismantling of progressive politics and the emergence of evangelical conservatism in Latin America. At the height of Liberation Theology, the Catholic Church, especially through movements such as the Base Ecclesial Communities, played a fundamental role in defending the rights of the poor and promoting a radical critique of the structures of power and exploitation. The option for the poor, so central to this movement, aimed not only at a change on the spiritual plane, but also at transforming the material conditions of life and at criticizing the economic and social inequalities present in the region.

The rise of evangelical conservatism may have been favored by the gap left by the Catholic Church in the fight against inequality and in defense of social transformation. Instead of a progressive and engaged Church, neo-Pentecostal churches in Latin America began to gain political power, often aligned with neoliberal governments and with a much stronger focus on moral issues – as we will also see in this issue of the

magazine, in the analyses of sociologist Betty Ruth Lozano. This is a new theological movement, largely aligned with far-right politics.

Gustavo Gutiérrez's absence will leave a profound void in the fight for the dignity of the poor, as his tireless voice and his theological vision deeply committed to social justice have always been beacons of hope and transformation for the oppressed of Latin America.

The first article that pays tribute to Gustavo Gutiérrez is by the Italian/Brazilian Giovanni Semeraro, a research professor at the Fluminense Federal University (Brazil). In ***Gustavo Gutierrez and the legacy of Liberation Theology***, Semeraro places the theologian and political figure Gustavo Gutierrez - "father of Liberation Theology" - in the Latin American scenario of the 1960s and 1970s, of the Cold War and dictatorships, and of the struggles for Latin American liberation. "Left-wing Christianity" is explained based on the renewal of the European Church, but mediated by the responses of Latin American theologians from the concrete place of regional oppression, that is, of the exceptional governments of dictatorships, of the remnants of colonialism in internal relations and of the permanent threat of North American imperialism. The centrality of the concept of poverty in Gutierrez brings to light not only the subject-patient of oppression - the poor or people who live in poverty - but mainly the causes of poverty, that is, the contradictions between oppressors and oppressed, as contradictions that "are not divine designs", but concrete relations between colonizing and dependent countries, and dominant classes with subordinate ones: "the popular masses are not simply poor, but oppressed and exploited".

From the perspective of this renewed Christianity, whose "potential is revolutionary" – according to Semeraro – the Latin American church is placed in conflict with the church that is an agent of social hierarchies, colonial and capitalist expansion, and that turns a blind eye to misery,

suffering and social injustice. The “option for the poor”, on the other hand, promoted by Liberation Theology, would seek to transform the concrete situation of the oppressed into active and conscious agents of their liberation. In this context, the Church of the poor cannot be neutral against exploitation, but will have as one of its central tasks – and the life of Gustavo Gutierrez is a testament to this mission – the denunciation of the accumulation of the “wealthy classes”, their “hypocrisy”, their “selfishness” and the violence of wealth and power against the oppressed.

Semeraro concludes his fundamental analysis by placing Liberation Theology and Gutiérrez in dialogue with the most fruitful liberation practices of that political moment in Latin America, the practice of liberating education - mainly that of Paulo Freire -, “of the philosophy of liberation, of the political liberation movements, of the sociology and economy of liberation (‘Dependency Theory’), of the most diverse artistic and cultural expressions of liberation that spread within and outside the South American continent”.

The second article in issue 50 of **BJLAS** comes from Colombia, and from the hands of two philosophers who are researchers in theology, Israel Arturo Orrego-Echeverría, from the Universidad Libre de Colombia, and Manuel Leonardo Prada Rodríguez, from the Universidad Industrial de Santander (Colombia). The article entitled **Gustavo Gutierrez: A Theology Committed to the Historical Praxis of Liberation** begins with a fundamental distinction – a dualism – that allows us to understand the exact place from which Gustavo Gutierrez developed his Christian theological thought, and thus, his ethical-philosophical commitment and his intellectual and political struggles for the poor in Latin America. The authors distinguish interpretative matrices of the life of Christ, spirituality and holiness that, since the origins of Christianity, oppose the more dogmatic readings focused on the salvation of the spirit without historical obligations to those that assume the commitment to the needs and salvation of others. For Gutierrez, however, the history of salvation would be

the meeting of theological practice with historical practice, because God is not alien to the search for justice, “takes sides with the oppressed”, “took pity on the slaves”.

Rejecting the privileged position of the “conventional church” - an elitist church that preaches conformity - Gutierrez’s criticisms of Western modernity, Eurocentrism, developmentalism, capitalism, among others, are for the victims of this exclusionary development, and for this reason, his ethical sensitivity will derive in “feminisms, indigenisms, environmentalisms” and in other forms of resistance against the “global dominance of capitalism” and the white, sexist, exclusionary and anthropomorphized God.

Orrego-Echeverría and Prada Rodríguez discuss Gutierrez’s “cultural Marxism,” but they invert the theory-praxis relationship with the praxis-theory relationship. In other words, instead of interpreting the oppressive reality through readings of historical materialism, Gutierrez would construct his interpretation of reality through the path with the people, through intimate communion with the oppressed, by constructing, with “God’s guidance” and in community with the oppressed, the “path to liberation.” In this context, as the authors conclude, “it would not be acceptable to call Gutierrez a Marxist because he only articulates theology with social sciences, but without synthesizing them.” In this context, the adoption of dialectical materialism by liberation theologians would have an interpretative, rather than dogmatic, methodological role, since its horizon would not be socialism, but the Kingdom of God.

In this way, the authors also distinguish a central aspect in the struggles for liberation during the years of dictatorship and states of exception: the interpretation of historical materialism, in the armed struggle, sought social justice through violence, while liberation theologians sought immersion in grassroots ecclesiastical communities,

alongside the marginalized and impoverished, in favor of the formation of a critical consciousness of transformation of reality and supported by the saving actions of Christ's example.

The paradigm of liberation and the option for the poorest in the decades at the height of military dictatorships in Latin America allowed what Semeraro (2007, p. 96) considers the “astonishing flowering of innovative political-pedagogical practices and theoretical creations in various fields that had ‘liberation’ as their unifying theme”.

The detachment from grassroots communities and the central role of liberating political formation by left-wing political parties at the time of redemocratization, unions and even the Catholic Church, resulted in the disarticulation and weakening of one of the most important experiences in building a transformative consciousness of reality, which was the Church and Liberation Theology.

The abandonment of the liberating practice in the left-wing camp paved the way for both the restructuring of the State along neoliberal lines and the consolidation of individualistic and depoliticized alternatives for social reproduction, such as entrepreneurship, which replaces the coordinated action of workers against forms of capital exploitation. In this context, individualistic, depoliticizing solutions that are contrary to human rights created the conditions for the return, in the second decade of the 21st century, of a conservative right wing – patriarchal and militaristic – in terms of customs and (neo)liberal in terms of the economy. The most prominent expression of this right wing are Christian churches, mainly neo-Pentecostal, analyzed in this issue of **BJLAS** by Colombian sociologist Betty Ruth Lozano, from Unibautista (Colombia), in the article **Religious Fundamentalism, Racial Capitalism and Civilizational Crisis**. At this turn of events, it is not surprising that the Church of the Poor was replaced by Prosperity Theology, which promotes business practices within the church, and by Domination Theology, in which the political project of dominionist

churches is to occupy positions of power in the State, to impose values and foundations of a peculiar interpretation of the Bible. Lozano is assertive when she states that the purpose of this fundamentalist endeavor in politics is not only to occupy the public sphere, in addition to the private one, but also to transform the State into an extension of their beliefs.

The solid theses defended by the author of this article are nourished by the thinking of black Latin American women and decolonial theories, as well as by Latin American theology and critical thought. As a result, the author observes that Christian fundamentalism has become a central instrument of conservative and neoliberal hegemony. It is an essential strategy for penetration and interventionism by the United States and, above all, it is the basis on which state violence, including genocide, is justified, because “a demonic threat [...] must be exterminated.”

Lozano's article presents the dramatic antithesis of the results of a Church that does not propose the practice of liberation. The recent cases of state violence and political polarization in Colombia and Brazil, as well as the Palestinian genocide, are concrete examples of the scope and dynamics of contemporary religious fundamentalism.

The political scenario of Gustavo Gutiérrez's work can be analyzed in the fourth article we present in this issue of **BJLAS**.

Without the opportunity to discuss the central theme of this edition, historian Antonino Zunino, from the University of the Republic (Uruguay), proposes a very timely article that outlines central aspects of the Latin American political scene of the 1970s, through the analysis of a military government in Peru that, against the current of regional dictatorships, promoted a developmentalist and progressive program from the point of view of social achievements, although politically it did not assume commitments to formal democracy. In **Peruvian Military Developmentalism of the 1970s revisited from Uruguay: A unique phase**

in the development of capitalism in that country and the attraction that "Peruvianism" exerted during those critical years in the Region,

the author analyzes the military progressivism of Juan Velasco Alvarado, a sui generis president who, in the context of the radicalization of the dictatorships of the second half of the 20th century in Latin America, distanced himself from the security doctrines promoted by the United States, while designing a nationalist government program that confronted the Peruvian oligarchies. Velasco Alvarado benefited Peruvian peasants with the Agrarian Reform and implemented a developmentalist project to strengthen the internal market and reduce social inequalities.

The originality of the article is that Zunino does not stop to evaluate the military progressivism of the Peruvian case, but analyzes how, in a given scenario, the Peruvian experience would have found acceptance among segments of the left. The specific case that Zunino studies is the Uruguayan scenario of the pre-civic-military dictatorship.

The following articles in issue 50 of ***BJLAS*** bring valuable analyses in various fields of social sciences.

To begin with, the joint work of Carlos Augusto Viáfara López, from the Universidad del Valle (Colombia), and Yoná dos Santos, from the University of São Paulo (Brazil), is a comparative analysis of methodologies and data from the demographic census of Brazil and Colombia. In ***Rises and declines in the Afro-descendant population in Latin America: the experiences of Colombia and Brazil in the 2018 and 2022 censuses,*** Viáfara López and dos Santos present the main statistical data from the census in both countries and then discuss the census information that fails to meaningfully reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of these countries. The methodologies used in each case are described and interpreted in light of the critiques of decolonial thought, denouncing the difficulties in identifying social diversity, the invisibility hidden beneath the data, the limits of resources and, among others, the political choices that are

imposed on each criterion. The article is enriched by the temporal analysis of censuses throughout the 20th century, highlighting the problems of each moment. Tables with statistics and charts illustrate the cases and allow for a better comparison of two countries that, in South America, are paradigmatic for studies of structural racism in Latin America.

The article by Flávia Lessa de Barros and Lília Gonçalves Magalhães Tavolaro, both researchers at the Department of Latin American Studies at the University of Brasília (Brazil), is a comprehensive study of the production of knowledge about Latin America that takes place in Brazil. The article is entitled ***Production of knowledge on Latin America by Research Groups in Brazil: characteristics, potentials and challenges***. This is a fruitful quantitative study, constructed from a database of the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology that brings together the country's research groups, and which is complemented by questionnaires applied to the leaders of each group that, although not specialized in studies about Latin America, has been studying issues in the region from various fields of knowledge. The relevance of this study is to highlight how Latin America and the Caribbean are becoming a theme and object of research, even in centers that regularly produce North Eurocentric knowledge. Another fundamental aspect is the criticism by research leaders of the lack of government support for studies on the region, something that is also reflected in the various forums and spaces for the production of knowledge about the region.

Tables and charts enrich the analyses with details about the region where the research groups operate, the main topics covered and the areas in which such studies are developed.

The current relevance of the next article is reflected in the title ***Sustainable Development and decolonial Constitutionalism: the appreciation of the value of work of nature as foundation of the***

economic order. This essentially theoretical work presents the possibility of transforming Nature into a subject of Law. It is a reflection in the field of constitutional law by researcher Marcelo Barros Jobim, from the Maceió Higher Education Center in Brazil. Based on Latin American constitutionalism, mainly from Ecuador and Bolivia, and supported by the theoretical framework and criticisms of decolonial thought, the author debates articles in the Brazilian constitutional text of 1988, highlighting the absence of principles and standards for the protection of the Rights of Nature, which are mainly violated by modern instrumental reason, extractivism, and classical anthropocentrism. Contemporary legal rationality is also subject to criticism by Barros Jobim, whose liberal logic would ignore alternative logics, for example, agroecology, and indigenous thought that lives in harmony with Nature.

The following articles present analyses in the field of International Relations. The first paper is a historical review of an important moment in the participation of Mexican diplomacy in the UN and its negotiating role in the denuclearization initiatives in Latin America.

The article ***Alfonso García Robles and the Treaty of Tlatelolco: between the Cold War and denuclearization in Latin America*** is the result of bibliographical and documentary research on the work and performance of the ambassador and Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico in the Preparatory Commission for the denuclearization of the region, whose work resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967. The author is a researcher at the Center for Historical Studies of the Colegio de Michoacán (Mexico).

The main merit of the article is to have reconstructed in detail the sensitive period of the post-World War II and Cold War scenario, which peaked - in our case - with the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. The article analyzes historical documents and private archives in order to understand the delicate tasks and strategies of building consensus and eliminating

risks on the part of Mexican diplomacy - in the person of Alfonso García Robles - in order to transform Latin America into the first denuclearization zone in the world. The article highlights the role of Brazilian diplomacy, in conjunction with the Mexican effort, to integrate the group of nations that composed the drafting committee of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the region.

Relations between Panama and China are the focus of an article by Sebastian Naranjo Rodríguez, from Renmin University of China. Based on a comparative analysis of foreign policies, the author observes the difficult process of building bilateral relations interrupted by internal political fluctuations and the impact this has on the discontinuity of Panama's foreign policy with China. The article is entitled ***A comparative exploration of foreign policy strategies between Panama and China: how does the lack of governmental continuity impact economic activity?***

The instability of Panamanian foreign policy, sometimes more aligned with the interests of the United States, sometimes focused on a more independent approach of cooperation and dialogue with China, is finally assessed by the potential risks of Panama losing the economic opportunities that China has been offering to other countries in the region.

The article is accompanied by careful explanatory tables on the variables that mark economic, political and international cultural exchange cooperation between countries.

How decisions in international negotiations can be affected by a country's internal dynamics is also the focus of the article ***The main impedances for the ratification of the Treaty between Mercosur and the European Union: The Two-Level Games perspective***, by Rodolfo Vieira Nunes. In this work, the researcher from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (Brazil) analyzes the main obstacles to the Treaty between the economic blocs of Mercosur and the European Union. To understand the

fluctuations in internal dynamics and their influence on international negotiations, the author uses the Two-Level Games perspective, which allows the national and international levels to be fully combined in the analysis to identify the main impediments to the Treaty. Among the problems identified, resistance to change, such as the adoption of insourcing strategies, especially in Mercosur and the European Union, in sectors such as industry and agriculture, are some of the obstacles that require the elimination of tariffs and the creation of import quotas, that is, actions capable of creating friction with the internal base of each country.

Paraguay's policy of 're-exporting' products is the focus of the article ***The Paraguayan dilemma: between reexportation and Mercosur*** by researchers Luiza Peruffo and Kevin Wanderlan Fernandes dos Santos from the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Re-exporting in Paraguay is a strategy that involves importing products that are not intended for domestic consumption, but for resale to other countries in the region, without major transformations. This model, initiated in the 1970s during the dictatorship of Alfredo Stroessner, allowed Paraguay to generate resources for the regime without compromising its agro-export structure and consolidated close trade relations with Brazil and Argentina. However, the strategy is a persistent obstacle to Paraguay's full integration into Mercosur, which constitutes one of the main aspects of this country's bilateral relations with Brazil and Argentina. The article is accompanied by important graphs on re-exporting and the Paraguayan trade balance.

The 50th issue of **BJLAS** concludes with a review of the book "*Vender una ciudad. Gentrificación y turistificación en los centros históricos*" [Selling a city. Gentrification and Tourism in Historic Centers], by Iban Díaz Parra. The review, written by Guillermo Jajamovich from the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina) under the title ***(Not) Everything is gentrification***, highlights the comparative approach that the author of the work takes

based on case studies in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and the city of Seville (Spain).

References

DUSSEL, Enrique. El paradigma del Éxodo en la Teología de la Liberación.

Concilium: Revista internacional de teología, n. 209, p. 99-114, 1987.

Available at:

<https://repository.globethics.net/bitstream/handle/20.500.12424/191083/n25.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. Accessed on: 5 Dec. 2024.

FERNANDES, Florestan. Patrones de dominación externa en América Latina. In: **Dominación y desigualdad : el dilema social latinoamericano**.

México, D. F. : Siglo XXI Editores ; Buenos Aires : CLACSO, 2015[1970]. pp. 113-137. Available at:

<https://biblioteca-repositorio.clacso.edu.ar/bitstream/CLACSO/16357/1/AntologiaFernandes.pdf>. Accessed on: 4 Dec. 2024.

GONZÁLEZ CASANOVA, Pablo. La sociedad plural: la democracia en México.

In: **De la sociología del poder a la sociología de la explotación**: Pensar América Latina en el siglo XXI. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI / CLACSO, 2015[1965].

pp. 73-128. Available at:

<http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/coedicion/casanova/casanova.pdf>. Accessed on: 29 June. 2023.

GUTIERREZ, Gustavo. Liberation Praxis and Christian Faith. In: GIBELLINI, Rosino (org.), *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*. New York (Markynoll): Orbis, 1983.

IDB (Inter American Development Bank). **The Complexities of Inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean**. Inter American Development Bank.

March 6, 2024. Available at:

<https://www.iadb.org/es/noticias/las-complejidades-de-la-desigualdad-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe>. Accessed on: 5 Dec. 2023.

ONU/CEPAL. **Panorama Social de América Latina y el Caribe. La transformación de la educación como base para el desarrollo sostenible.**

CEPAL, 2022. Available at: <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/3ca376cf-edd4-4815-b392-b2a1f80ae05a/content>. Accessed on: December 2, 2022.

SEMERARO, Giovanni. Da Libertação à Hegemonia: Freire e Gramsci no Processo de Democratização do Brasil. **Rev. Sociol. Polít.**, n. 29, p. 95-104, Nov. 2007. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-44782007000200008>. Accessed on: January 22, 2020.

DOI:[10.11606/issn.1676-6288.prolam.2024.232672](https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1676-6288.prolam.2024.232672)

*Recebido em: 01/01/2025
Aprovado em: 01/01/2025
Publicado em: 01/01/2025*