Special Data Feature



# Introducing the Latin American Transnational Surveillance (LATS) dataset

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### Abstract

Transnational surveillance is a powerful tool in the arsenal of autocrats the world over. Despite its pervasive use in extraterritorial coercion, the systematic study of surveillance of regime opponents beyond national borders remains underdeveloped in political science, primarily due to limited data availability. To help fill this gap, we constructed the Latin American Transnational Surveillance dataset, a micro-level dataset based on declassified foreign surveillance reports produced between 1966 and 1986 by autocratic Brazil. Latin American Transnational Surveillance records the identity, locations, social ties and political activism of 17,000 individual targets of transnational surveillance, the vast majority of whom were tracked in neighbouring countries across Latin America. Drawing on these abundant data, we empirically explore existing theoretical insights about the motivations, methods and consequences of transnational surveillance, a task that would be difficult to do using other sources. We also leverage social network analysis to showcase potential applications of Latin American Transnational Surveillance in the testing of collective-action theories of transnational political violence.

### Keywords

transnational surveillance, political violence, dissident networks

# Introduction

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Few recent trends pose a more daunting challenge to democratic movements worldwide than transnational repressive practices by autocratic regimes. Using cross-border Matias Spektor, School of International Relations, Fundação Getulio Vargas, Avenida Paulista, 548 - Bela Vista, São Paulo - SP, 01310-000, Brazil. Email: matias.spektor@gmail.com

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violence and intimidation, dictators monitor, infiltrate, harass, detain, kidnap, repatriate, torture, disappear and murder their domestic opponents living abroad. From China to Russia, Saudi Arabia to Rwanda, transnational repressive practices are on the rise (Schenkkan and Linzer, 2021). A prominent instrument in the autocratic repressive toolkit is transnational surveillance (TS), that is, the gathering and transmission of information about the activities conducted in jurisdictions other than their home state by individuals who might pose a threat to the governing regime (Tsourapas, 2022). While democracies may also employ TS strategies, as with America's 'war on terror' (Kahler, 2010), this paper specifically directs its attention towards autocratic regimes. In such contexts, TS serves as a pivotal tool for undermining opposition forces and safeguarding against potential regime change at home.

Recent scholarship has significantly advanced our understanding of how surveillance shapes transnational political violence. Autocrats leverage sensitive information about dissidents abroad to erode the resources at their disposal for taking effective action against the regime (Chaudhary and Moss, 2019; Cooley and Heathershaw, 2017; Danneman and Ritter, 2014; Glasius, 2023; Michaelsen, 2018; Ritter and Conrad, 2016; Tsourapas, 2020). In this perspective, transnational dissident networks are informal institutions that seek to lower collaboration costs among regime challengers. By monitoring their members, dictators are better positioned to sever the ties that hold these networks together (Moss, 2018, 2022; Ward et al., 2011). Moreover, by using TS to distinguish high-value versus low-value targets and differentiate nonviolent activists from armed insurgents, autocrats reduce the costs of repression, thereby improving their odds of survival in office (Chenoweth and Cunningham, 2013; Kalyvas, 2019; Liu, 2022; Siegel, 2011; Xu, 2021).

While these foundational theories offer valuable insights, they have been notably challenging to test empirically due to the scarcity of data on TS (Dukalskis et al., 2022) For a host of political and legal reasons, the declassification of official records on state-sponsored surveillance in foreign jurisdictions remains rare even among advanced democracies featuring state-of-the-art freedom of information laws. Unsurprisingly, empirical work to date has relied for the most part on the efforts of courageous scholars, investigative journalists and personnel at non-governmental organizations (Schenkkan and Linzer, 2021) in places as diverse as Uzbekistan (Amnesty International, 2017), Syria (Amnesty International, 2011), Cuba (Suárez, 2019), Turkmenistan (Human Rights Watch, 2019), Egypt (Dunne and Hamzawy, 2019) and China (Human Rights Watch, 2020; Rajagopalan and Rashbaumn, 2023). While these efforts have yielded invaluable insights, the data derived from them are contingent upon what can be observed by regime outsiders.

A unique opportunity to advance our understanding of TS therefore arises with the mandatory declassification of historical documents from autocratic Brazil (Schneider, 2019; Torelly, 2018). The country's National Archive has publicly disclosed 7942 reports, totalling 12,855 pages of un-redacted text produced over a 20-year span by the Foreign Information Center (Centro de Informações do Exterior (CIEX)), the regime's clandestine foreign intelligence agency tasked with monitoring opponents worldwide between 1966 and 1986. This unparalleled disclosure of TS practices by regime insiders provides scholars with a novel data source, allowing for the observation directly from the official documentary record of monitored individuals, their cross-border movements and their transnational social connections. Drawing on these raw intelligence reports, this article constructs the Latin American Transnational Surveillance (LATS) dataset, a new tool for testing theoretical propositions regarding TS. Given that the dataset comprises openly accessible documents without vetting from Brazilian authorities, LATS stands out as exceptionally suitable for replication and further research.

In the following sections, we provide the context within which the data originated and its scope, and describe our data construction process. We present descriptive statistics on key variables of interest, showcasing how LATS facilitates empirical exploration of core theoretical propositions in the study of transnational political violence. Additionally, we leverage LATS for social network analysis, shedding light on how social ties and network structures may influence cross-border interactions between dictators and their victims. The final section summarizes our findings and outlines promising directions for future research using the dataset.

## Data origin and scope

On 31 March 1964, Brazil's armed forces unseated a democratically elected government and installed an autocratic regime that would retain office for the next two decades. Thousands fled either as exiles, refugees or asylum seekers to neighbouring countries (Marchesi, 2017), where they formed support groups and launched public awareness campaigns. In response to fears that

the diaspora might effectively smear the regime and secure funding and training for domestic insurgencies to overthrow it, Brazilian dictators established the CIEX (Fico, 2001), as predicted by theories of state repression showing that new forms of anti-regime activism prompt autocrats to strategically enhance their repressive methods (Chenoweth et al., 2017). The official directive that created the CIEX in 1966 construed it as a clandestine outfit working from within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the supervision of career diplomats (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 1967). Secrecy was paramount because tracking and targeting nationals and their associates abroad could potentially defy rights enshrined in international law such as free movement, free assembly and free speech, while also infringing upon the norms of sovereignty and non-intervention. Public exposure of state secrets of this kind could potentially invite the very international opprobrium and legal action that Brazilian dictators were hoping to avoid. For its daily operations, the CIEX leveraged a dozen embassies and consulates in South America (Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay), Western Europe (France, Portugal and Switzerland) and Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Poland and the Soviet Union) (Penna Filho, 2009, 2011). Unconfirmed reports further suggest that the CIEX may have operated outposts in Bolivia, Peru, Venezuela and the United Kingdom (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014). The CIEX's surveillance work on the ground was carried out by career diplomats and consular officials, intelligence officers recruited from outside the foreign service and, in some cases, paid local informants.

Each CIEX intelligence report records the identities, activities, movements and networking efforts of surveillance targets, occasionally unveiling regime tactics for monitoring, infiltrating and, in some instances, repatriating dissenters. Some of these documents also provide insights into the repressive measures employed by security forces across Latin American autocracies – including unlawful detention, torture, extrajudicial killings and the disposal of bodies - while some illustrate on-theground collaboration between the security apparatuses of various regional countries from the mid-1960s onwards. Although the CIEX collection does not explicitly name Operation Condor, it reveals a pattern of TS and repression that predates and runs parallel to this formal operation. Operation Condor, initiated in 1975, was a covert programme led by military dictatorships in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay, aimed at tracking down and eliminating political opponents across and beyond Latin America (Lessa, 2022).

This collaboration among autocrats involved sharing intelligence and resources to orchestrate the detention and sometimes execution of dissidents. The CIEX documents suggest that the roots of such repressive collaborations are deeper and older than Operation Condor itself, shedding light on both the precursory activities and the broader efforts under Condor, enriching our understanding of regional security cooperation during this era.

The CIEX's primary surveillance focus was on individuals living and working in Latin American countries other than Brazil. This reflects the reality of the sweeping wave of social unrest starting in the 1960s that challenged governing regimes across the region and created unique opportunities for the establishment of transnational networks of resistance against state repression (Field et al., 2020; Roniger and Green, 2007; Weyland, 2019). Given that only 30% of mentions in the documentary record are Brazilian nationals, with the vast majority being nationals from neighbouring countries, we opted to name our dataset the *Latin American Transnational Surveillance Dataset*, emphasizing its broad regional scope.

For all the richness of the CIEX data, it is crucial to acknowledge two potential biases. First, given the discretion of state agents in executing orders from autocratic leaders (DeMeritt, 2015; Greitens, 2016), on- theground surveillance may have been influenced by their ideological preferences (Scharpf, 2018). Reports authored by staunch regime supporters might have exaggerated foreign dissident activism to gain favour with political leaders in Brasília, while more critical individuals may have downplayed diaspora activism to undermine the regime's repressive capacity abroad. Secondly, reporting bias could have arisen due to authors' diverse backgrounds, as research indicates that variations in skill sets and professional experiences among repressive agents can shape state violence (Scharpf and Gläßel, 2020). These disparities may have influenced the quality and content of the reports.

# **Building LATS**

### Data construction

We obtained the CIEX collection from the National Archive of Brazil's web portal, comprising 233 PDF files. These files contain digitally scanned intelligence records processed through optical character recognition (OCR) to convert image-based text into machine-readable format. Typically, these records are paper reports originally typed on ink typewriters, often with varying resolutions and handwritten annotations in the margins. We manually processed the data, opting not to rely on automated methods, considering both the practical limitations of the CIEX collection and the experiences of other scholars in the field (Chenoweth et al., 2019; Day et al., 2015). Although a possibility, text-mining presented three interconnected challenges. First, the CIEX's annotated scanned documents impede proper OCR processing, complicating automated document interpretation. Second, text mining could overlook nuanced micro-data requiring human interpretation, such as intricate accounts of dissident relocation. Lastly, due to inconsistencies such as name and geographical misspellings, automated scripts could struggle to identify patterns.

Instead, we recruited and trained 18 undergraduate research assistants to manually code approximately 660 intelligence reports each, with an additional 60 reports chosen for cross-validation (see Online Appendix A for the inter-coder reliability assessment). Entries were made for all documents in the archival record, a task which took 14 weeks to complete. Research assistants categorized individuals into nine groups and collected geospatial and temporal data. We took several measures to ensure the quality of coding. First, we provided specific training on interpreting text from the documents. Second, the research assistants entered data into a shared online spreadsheet for real-time tracking, and each entry was reviewed by the authors for accuracy. Third, two of us were available around the clock to address student queries as their task progressed. Fourth, group meetings addressed problems as they arose, including name standardization. Lastly, 10% of reports were randomly cross-validated by a random student to reduce measurement errors.

We estimate that a total of 8330 documents were generated by the CIEX, of which 388 are missing. This estimate was based on the serial numbers assigned to each of the 7942 documents currently made available by Brazil's National Archive. However, among these, we only include 6623 reports (79.5%) in the LATS dataset, as they explicitly identify individuals by name. The estimated 388 missing documents are concentrated in 1966 and 1972, with 180 and 154 missing documents, respectively. The concentration of missing documents in 1966 likely stems from the embryonic phase of CIEX operations, a period marked by a lack of standardized procedures and the manual annotation of document numbers. While we do not have a definitive theory for the missing documents in 1972, we are inclined to attribute this to bureaucratic mismanagement rather than deliberate destruction because the regime preserved other documents within the collection that could be considered

incriminating, such as detailed intelligence reports on sensitive cross-border operations. Detailed enumeration of the missing documents across different years is available in Online Appendix C.

LATS has a multilevel structure with Report-Individual-Connections as the observation units. From each report, we document individuals, their affiliations, countries of birth and residence, and the interactions among them (including locations and dates). This enables LATS to reaggregate data across different units of analysis, facilitating research on multiple questions pertaining to TS. Reaggregation codes are accessible with the replication materials of this article.

### Classification of surveillance targets

Our categorization of subjects closely mirrored the terminology used by officials monitoring adversaries, with the individual serving as the unit of analysis. We sorted individuals mentioned in intelligence reports into groups based on their characteristics, attributes and activities, noting that these categories are not mutually exclusive – the same individual can appear in multiple categories. This involved categorizing people who appear in multiple reports over time according to the descriptors used in each report. The categories are as follows:

- Gender, 'male' or 'female'.
- *Dissident*, Brazilian national committed to non-violent regime change.
- *Insurgent*, Brazilian national committed to regime change through violent action.
- Foreign rebel, non-Brazilian individuals opposing Right-wing authoritarian rule in countries other than Brazil.
- Opposition ally, non-Brazilian sympathizer and supporter of dissidents and insurgents.
- *Regime ally*, non-Brazilian sympathizer with and supporter of the Brazilian regime.
- *Military*, member of the armed forces of any country, including Brazil.
- *Regime Government Official*, acting official of the Brazilian state.
- *Foreign Government Official*, acting official of states other than Brazil.

We allocated individuals to the category that best represents their median assessment across all intelligence reports. For instance, an individual described as a *dissident* in two reports and an *insurgent* in one report was categorized as a dissident.

# **Descriptive findings**

### Report structure

Both the content length and structure of CIEX intelligence reports underwent change and adaptation over time, reflecting regime learning. In their more complete form, reports featured a letterhead with the CIEX acronym and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs logo, consisting of two standardized sections. The first section included six pieces of information: classification level (e.g., 'secret,' confidential,' or 'restricted'); serial number and date; content classification and accuracy rating; date; distribution list; and title with content description. The second part contained narrative content. Some reports included initials or signatures from authors, but it remains uncertain whether these represent real or code names. The Appendix depicts report structure evolution over time.

# Report-level data

We find intelligence reports to feature significant temporal variation on four scores: frequency; length; selfassessed accuracy ratings; and geographical focus. First, LATS illustrates a declining trend in report frequency. Figure 1(a) shows that report production peaked at 97 reports per month in September 1968 but gradually decreased to just one report per month 18 years later. One plausible explanation is that if autocrats track their opponents abroad to undermine anti-regime collective action, then surveillance activity should be more intense at times when regime officials perceive serious threats to survival in office compared to periods when they feel relatively secure (Dukalskis et al., 2023). Indeed, Brazilian dictators were at their most vulnerable between 1966 and 1973, when they confronted a small but influential armed insurgency (De Almeida Teles, 2017; Serbin, 2019). By 1974, following the violent suppression of the insurgency, the regime initiated a slow process of political liberalization labelled as abertura (opening), with the view to better control the transition from autocratic rule amid a severe economic downturn (Chirio, 2018). This strategic shift marked the beginning of a series of reforms aimed at gradually dismantling the authoritarian structures that had defined Brazil's military dictatorship for the previous decade. In 1978, the regime repealed Institutional Act Number Five (AI-5), an instrument that allowed them to close Congress and rule by decree. The liberalization process culminated in 1979 with the enactment of an amnesty law, allowing political exiles to return to Brazil in

exchange for shielding regime officials from future legal prosecution. Second, report average length increased over time (Figure 1(b)). Earlier reports averaged one page, while later reports grew to three to four pages on average. We interpret this as follows: in earlier years, when regime threats were more imminent, reports prioritized the accurate tracking of individuals and as a result were concise. By contrast, in the years of *abertura*, when the regime had eliminated high-value targets, reports progressively shifted towards longer, descriptive narratives of international events such as Vatican conclave politics and Soviet Politburo disputes.

Third, LATS displays the self-assessed accuracy ratings that regime officials assigned to their reports in an alphanumeric scale to evaluate the quality of their own intelligence. We approach this data on accuracy with caution because the key criteria for the scale, the grading metrics and ranking procedures are unknown. At face value, this is a story of fluctuating regime confidence in intelligence reports. Initially, reports mainly received 'high' to 'medium' confidence ratings. However, these positive ratings began to decline in 1971, coinciding with the regime intensifying its repressive tactics against opponents. By 1974, following the suppression of armed insurgency, 41% of the reports were rated 'low' (Figure 2). Self-reported accuracy grades significantly improved after 1978, with 74% of documents in 1986 receiving a 'high' rating. This pattern suggests that during periods of heightened security concern, regime officials were stricter in evaluating intelligence quality, while during times when security concerns eased, they relaxed the rigour of their assessments.

Fourth, LATS reveals marked shifts in geographical focus over time. Figure 3 shows that the regime sequentially targeted opposition activity in Uruguay (1966-1970), Chile (1970–1973), Argentina (1973–1975) and Portugal (1976 onwards). While the present study cannot definitively explain these patterns, we tentatively propose that TS focused on locations that attracted large concentrations of Brazilian diaspora members. More specifically, we hypothesize that surveillance activity followed political 'springs' characterized by the expansion of the democratic freedoms, progressive politics and youth activism that may have made these locations attractive to the Brazilian diaspora escaping extraterritorial coercion by their home regime. If this interpretation is correct, Brazilian autocrats deployed surveillance in those locations where opponents concentrated, as these concentrations may facilitate antiregime collec tive action. Reinforcing this line of argument is the fact that the onset of dictatorial rule in each one of these neighbouring countries coincided with the



**Figure 1.** The Centro de Informações do Exterior surveillance reports: (a) Number of reports per month. (b) Average report length per month.



Figure 2. Confidence level of surveillance reports.

end of the CIEX's focus in that location. In other words, Brazilian regime officials likely stopped worrying about anti-regime activism in those places where autocratization would have driven Brazilian diaspora members to flee. This would help explain why, by 1976, when the bulk of South America was largely governed by anti-Communist dictatorships, the CIEX shifted its focus to Portugal. Portugal's progressive Carnations Revolution in 1974, plus existing cultural and linguistic ties, made it a prime destination for the Brazilian diaspora until the repeal of AI-5 in 1978 and the amnesty law of 1979. Finally, Figure 3 reveals that, although the CIEX primarily engaged in foreign surveillance, it also tracked opponents within Brazil, likely focusing on individuals active at home who had been abroad or maintained significant transnational connections.

### Individual-level data

LATS spans two decades, covering approximately 17,000 individuals, with about 15,000 named in the reports (the rest remained unnamed). Figure 4 illustrates yearly mentions, peaking at 3500 in 1976. The steep decline in mentions after 1976 likely reflects the effects of *abertura*, signalling a significant shift in the regime's priorities and tactics. The data also highlight a greater number of nonviolent dissidents compared to violent insurgents. Although most targets were male, documents raise questions for future exploration about gender dynamics in transnational resistance networks.

Furthermore, we find that surveillance activity extended well beyond the mere tracking of nationals. As Table 1 indicates, although Brazilian nationals comprise the single



Figure 3. Annual report counts by surveillance target in selected countries (top five most cited).



Figure 4. Number of individuals tracked per year.

largest national group of tracked individuals, they represent just under 30% of all mentions in the dataset. The dataset reveals that the regime's primary focus was the monitoring of citizens from neighbouring South American countries, key destinations for the Brazilian diaspora. By tracking these non-nationals, the regime's surveillance effort yielded valuable insights into the transnational connections of their co-national challengers, as well as into the various rebellious movements against Right-wing dictatorial rule across Latin America (see Figure 5). It is worth noting that the relatively large number of individuals from the USSR in LATS likely results from multiple reports on political events in that country and their potential impact on the global Communist movement.

The finding that TS targeted a lesser proportion of nationals compared to non-nationals has serious theoretical implications. On the one hand, it challenges conventional notions of who counts as a victim of transnational state repression by highlighting the degree to which non-nationals too can suffer the extraterritorial arm of foreign autocracies. On the other, it prompts us to reevaluate the impact of autocratic state repression against dissent on international relations writ large, including how transnational political violence may affect civil liberties in an interconnected world.

### Potential applications

Drawing on the theoretical insight that autocrats use TS to identify actual or potential enemies and map their social connections, we constructed a network of regime challengers that includes dissidents, insurgents and dissident allies, a sample comprising approximately 3700 individuals (see Table 2). In constructing this network, we used two decades of information about these individuals, focusing solely on explicitly reported relationships without assuming timing or changes in network dynamics.<sup>1</sup> This approach leverages all available data points and minimizes potential biases, but it intentionally opens the door for future scholars to use information contained within LATS to construct time-sensitive network trajectories, offering invaluable insight into how Brazilian autocrats' surveillance practices and perceptions of opposition networks actually evolved over time.

We employed three complementary methods to delineate the connections within our network of regime challengers.

# Building network connections: Methods N1 and N2

We employed two methods to map connections among challengers. In one, we considered connections only if *explicitly mentioned* in the document text (N1). In the other, research assistants used their judgement *to infer* 

	· I I	
Nationality	Mentions	Proportion
Brazil	2,540	29.68%
Uruguay	987	11.53%
Chile	559	6.53%
Argentina	539	6.30%
USSR	524	6.12%
Portugal	420	4.91%
United States	287	3.35%
Bolivia	224	2.62%
Venezuela	186	2.17%
Paraguay	176	2.06%
France	172	2.01%
Cuba	158	1.85%
Peru	103	1.20%
Colombia	92	1.08%
Suriname	70	0.82%
Nicaragua	64	0.75%
Spain	64	0.75%
Panama	63	0.74%
Italy	60	0.70%
Mexico	60	0.70%
Total top 20	7,344	85.86%

Table 1. Nationality proportions.

connections based on report content without external sources (N2). When no evidence indicated a connection, we assumed none. Both methods assigned confidence levels to connections in each report, acknowledging potential variations in information accuracy.

### Benchmark network (BN)

To benchmark human-coded networks (N1 and N2), we used a computational algorithm to create a third, comention network, referred to as the BN. The BN assumes connections between individuals mentioned in the same document, regardless of content. By merging report-level networks, it establishes ties with minimal human intervention, offering a less restrictive criterion. This approach provides upper-bound estimates for network statistics (e.g., nodes, edges and clustering) and lower-bound estimates for others (e.g., diameter and clusters), helping us to understand network characteristics and serving as a reference for evaluating human coding results in N1 and N2.

### Findings from network statistics

Our network mapping of regime challengers reveals consistent node counts but varying edge numbers, from the restrictive explicit mentions method (N1) to the inclusive BN (see Table 3). This variance illustrates differences in network interconnectedness, aligning our average degree centrality (6.78 to 36.51) with real-world social and academic networks (5.26 to 43.69), a comparison that is useful for contextualizing the scope and density of our network against those of more open, social contexts.<sup>2</sup>

Our regime challengers network also exhibits higher clustering (ranging from 0.56 to 0.63) than observed in typical networks, suggesting a propensity for forming cohesive subgroups.<sup>3</sup> With a network diameter smaller than academic collaboration networks but comparable to social networks, this structure indicates an optimized flow of information and resources among challengers, potentially bolstering opponent ability to resist state-led transnational coercion.<sup>4</sup>

The network of regime challengers in LATS exhibits low degree homophily, the tendency of individuals with similar attributes to associate. This indicates that central nodes, that is, individuals with many ties, primarily engaged with less connected individuals. Such a configuration suggests a network possibly centralized around a few active challengers or distorted by surveillance focus on these few high-value figures. We also identify the prevalence of two sub-networks: dissidents in LATS tend to connect with other dissidents more than with insurgents, while insurgents form closer ties within their group, leaving cross-group interactions notably rare (see Online Appendix C). This selective connectivity highlights the strategic separation between non-violent and armed challengers. In addition, we find that nationality further influenced connectivity, with a pronounced tendency for individuals of the same nationality to cluster, as shown in a 50-node Ego-Network analysis (Figure 6). This pattern showcases Brazilian nationals (nodes in yellow) as a cohesive core, surrounded by individuals of other nationalities (blue nodes) and unidentified nationality (orange nodes), highlighting the role of national identity in transnational network formation.

Network analysis also offers valuable insight into TS practices. By examining the yearly distribution of degree centrality among monitored individuals, Figure 7 reveals who were the most closely tracked targets. Periods with the highest number of reported targets coincide with the highest concentration of central individuals, as in Figure 1. In the 1960s, the median degree centrality was 6.62, rising to 7.85 in the 1970s, then falling to 1.65 as surveillance declined, indicating more effective monitoring of network activity during peak surveillance times.



Figure 5. Targets classification by groups and year (% of total number of individuals).

These findings underscore the utility of LATS in validating network theories that explain the impact of interpersonal connections on collective outcomes. Leveraging this dataset, scholars can now delve into whether the ties that bind the targets of TS can effectively improve their ability to survive cross-border state repression and enhance their capacity to contest autocratic regimes. They can also draw on the observed patterns of surveillance dynamics beyond Latin America. For example, recent research on dictatorial Taiwan (Liu, 2022) shows that regime surveillance targeted not only leading regime opponents but also their collaborators, opening a promising avenue for comparative work.

### Summary of findings and future directions

This article introduced the LATS dataset and its potential for illuminating key dynamics in transnational political violence. Our analysis revealed that surveillance in autocratic Brazil increased and improved when regime officials perceived a greater threat from opponents, leading to more concise and accurate reports. We also found strategic shifts in the regime's focus, suggesting adaptation to the geographical relocation of opponents. The data showed that TS targeted nationals abroad but it crucially emphasized the tracking of those foreign nationals who aided them or posed a challenge to their own home dictatorships. We also leveraged our ability to observe social ties among victims of TS in the dataset to describe an overarching network of regime opponents marked by numerous cohesive subgroups capable of facilitating the flow of resources and information, as well as a clear-cut distinction between nonviolent dissidents and violent insurgents. National identity emerged as a prominent magnet for opponent activism in transnational resistance networks. Together, these results strongly suggest that as scholars develop theories of TS, their propositions could be profitably examined using real-world intelligence reports.

Looking ahead, LATS offers promising research directions. For example, the dataset could help determine whether regime opponents enhance their odds of survival by forming specific types of transnational networks or if, by contrast, these connections increase their exposure to autocratic extraterritorial coercion (Boyd and Nowak, 2012; Haug, 2008). LATS could therefore aid in uncovering the assortativity of dissident ties (Javed et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2013). In addition, the dataset could shed light on whether node centrality plays a role in autocratic choices of extraterritorial repressive methods (Enders and Su, 2007; Kenney et al., 2017), and whether autocrats can preemptively intervene in networks to deter potential challenges (Ballester et al., 2006; Galeotti et al., 2020; Hiller, 2020). Finally, future research could explore whether dissidents choose their relocation strategies in anticipation of transnational repressive tactics by their home state (Steele, 2019).

	п	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Maximum
All individuals							
Female	16,988	0.15	0.36	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Dissident	17,482	0.13	0.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Insurgent	17,482	0.01	0.10	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Foreign rebel	17,482	0.59	0.48	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Dissident ally	17,482	0.07	0.24	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Regime ally	17,482	0.01	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Military	17,482	0.06	0.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Regime official	17,481	0.02	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Foreign government official	17,481	0.19	0.39	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Challengers							
Female	3,555	0.22	0.41	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Dissident	3,706	0.61	0.46	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Insurgent	3,706	0.05	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Foreign rebel	3,706	0.90	0.27	0.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Dissident ally	3,706	0.32	0.44	0.00	0.00	1.00	1.00
Regime ally	3,706	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Military	3,706	0.02	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Regime official	3,706	0.02	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00
Foreign government official	3,706	0.03	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.00

 Table 2. Individuals' classifications – summary statistics.

# Table 3. Network statistics.

	Benchmark network	Method	Method
		N1	N2
Nodes	3,706	3,706	3,706
Edges	67,683	12,586	18,125
Average degree	36.53	6.79	9.78
Degree – 1st quartile	3	0	1
Degree – 3rd quartile	47	4	8
Average clustering	0.89	0.79	0.83
Clusters (overall)	275	1,433	1,046
Clusters to nodes (ratio)	0.07	0.39	0.28
Clusters (excluding isolated nodes)	105	175	144
Diameter	8	9	10
Average path length	3.13	3.58	3.58
Average path length to diameter (ratio)	0.39	0.40	0.36
Density	0.01	0.00	0.00
Homophily (degree)	0.12	0.03	0.01
Homophily (dissident)	0.67	0.56	0.55
Homophily (insurgent)	0.29	0.58	0.50
Homophily (gender)	0.09	0.07	0.07
Homophily (nationality)	0.80	0.81	0.81



**Figure 6.** Ego-Network – network 1.



**Figure 7.** Centrality of challengers cited in surveillance reports – network 1.

Enhancing our understanding of the role of surveillance in transnational political violence requires scholars to validate and refine their theories using data. LATS is a valuable resource to meet this challenge.

# **Replication data**

The dataset, codebook, and do-files for the empirical analysis in this article, along with the online Appendix, can be found at http://www.prio.org/jpr/datasets and https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistent Id=doi:10.7910/DVN/PGHYTY.

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# Notes

- For the mathematical formulation, see Online Appendix B.
- As per the Stanford Network Analysis Project, the average degree of: (i) Twitter Ego-Network (directed) is 21.75; (ii) Facebook Ego-Network (undirected) is 43.69; and (iii) academic collaboration networks in five fields of Physics (undirected) are between 5.26 and 21.11. See https://snap.stanford.edu/data/#canets for more details.
- According to the Stanford Network Analysis Project: (i) Twitter Ego-Network has an average clustering coefficient of 0.5653; (ii) Facebook Ego-Network is at 0.6055; and (iii) collaboration networks in five Physics fields range from 0.4714 to 0.6334.
- As per the Stanford Network Analysis Project: (i) Twitter Ego-Network has a diameter of seven (as undirected); (ii) Facebook Ego-Network is eight; and (iii) collaboration networks in five Physics fields range from 13 to 17.

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# Appendix

(a), BR AN, 856 16.01.4, p. 36/99 Ven SECRETO OIEX/0/a/ 265 (BEX/EO nº 57) (cf.I.I. nº 1314.30-URUGUAI) Data: 16/AGO/66 Avaliação: C-2 SNI/ARJ D-2/GabMG / 2ªSec/EME Distribuição: ADITAR/ROU Indice: Asilados brasileiros comparecem a ato público. 1. Em 6 AGO 66, os asiledos brasileiros CANDIDO DA COSTA ARAGÃO, EMMANUEL NICOLL e ALFREDO RIBEIRO DAUDT, comparecerem ao ato público de "solidariadade a classe estudantil argentina", sob o patro cinio dos estudantes esquerdistas uruguaios. 2. O citado "ato" foi realizado nos salões da Universida de da República do Uruguai(ROU).

Appendix. (Continued)

	BR AIU, OSB 26 15.6, p. 131)14
	MINISTÉRIO DAS RELAÇÕES EXTERIORES CENTRO DE INFORMAÇÕES DO EXTERIOR
	CIEX nº 229/ 76 DATA: 30/JUNHO/1976
	NATUREZA:     Informe       AVALIAÇÃO:     B = 2       REFERÊNCIA:     DAIA DA CEIENÇÃO DO INFORME:
	DFUSÃO: SNI/AC CIE 2a.Sec./EMAER CENIMAR 2a.Sec./EMA CISA Ass/Ch AC/SNI
	NOKE, Portugal. FLAVIO TAVARES.
•	<ol> <li>O banido brasileiro FLAVIO TAVARES deverá chegar a Lisboa, procedente de Roma, por volta de 22 de junho de 1976, para fa zer a cobertura jornalística das eleições presidenciais portuguesas para a agência cubana de notícias "Prensa Latina".</li> <li>O nominado se encontra presentemente em Roma, com a finalidade de cobrir jornalisticamente as eleições italianas para a referida agência noticiosa.</li> <li>Em Portugal, hospedar-se-á na residência do asílado CARLOS FIGUEIREDO SÁ, à rua Janelas Verdes nº 32, lº andar.</li> <li>Consta que, posteriormente, deslocar-se-á a Luanda , Angola.</li> </ol>
	SECRETO

CIEX N <sup>2</sup> 060/ 86 MAUMEIA Informe ANAIMÉIA Informe ANAIMÉIA Informe ANAIMÉIA Informe ANAIMÉIA E - 2 REFERINA AC /Serviço Nacional de Informações. NENE Peru. Repressão ao terrorismo. Reunião dos Chefes de E -Maior das Forças Armadas do Peru e do Chile. 1. Segundo consta, durante a recente Reunião de Che Estado-Maior das Forças Armadas do Chile e do Peru não se tratou qualquer ação coordenada com vistas a contrarrestar atividades te roristas na região de fronteira entre os dois países. As mesmas tes indicaram, no entanto, que se realizam contatos esporádicos tre os serviços de inteligência dos dois países. Não existe indí seguro de uma expansão de atividades terroristas nos Departamen de Tacna e Moquegua, mas scria motivo de crescente preocupação Santiago a notória intensificação de "zonas liberadas". Recentem te teria sido detectado importante tráfico de armas e explosivos fronteira Peru-Bolívia, que estaria alimentando a atuação sender ta em Puno. Hã suspeita de que parte dessas armas venha da Anãr Central (Nicarãgua), mas ainda não se teria podido determinar segurança a fonte e trajetória do abastecimento externo de armas munições para os movimentos terroristas que atuam no Poru. É do recordar, a propósito, que, por ocasião da visita de TOMÁS BORGE Lima, chegou-se a mencionar que a negativa do Vice-Presidente L ALBERTO SANCHEZ em recebã-lo prendia-se à existência notória de culos entre BORGES e a cúpula do movimento revolucionário Tupac ru.		IERIO DAS RELAÇÕES EXTERIORES	CONFIDEN	CIAL
NATUREIA:       Informe         ANIAÇÃO:       B - 2         REFERINA:          DATA DA ONTENÇÃO DO INFORME MAI/86         INEXE:       Peru. Repressão ao terrorismo. Reunião dos Chefes de E -Maior das Porças Armadas do Peru e do Chile.         1.       Segundo consta, durante a recente Reunião de Che Estado-Maior das Porças Armadas do Chile e do Peru não se tratou qualquer ação coordenada com vistas a contrarrestar atividades tr roristas na região de fronteira entre os dois países. As mesmas tes indicaram, no entanto, que se realizam contatos esporádicos tre os serviços de inteligência dos dois países. Não existe indí seguro de uma expansão de atividades terroristas nos Departamen de Tacna e Moquegua, mas seria motivo de crescente preocupação Santiago a notória intensificação de movimentos do Sendero Lumin em Puno, inclusive com a formação de "zonas liberadas". Recentem te teria sido detoctado importante tráfico de armas e explosivos fronteira Peru-Bolívia, que estaria alimentando a atuação sender ta em Puno. Hã suspeita de que parte dessas armas venha da Amér Central (Nicarágua), mas ainda não se teria podido determinar segurança a fonte e trajetória do abastecimento externo de armas munições para os movimentos terroristas que atuam no Peru. É de recordar, a propósito, que, por ocasião da visita de TOMAS BORGE Lima, chegou-se a mencionar que a negativa do Vice-Presidente L ALEERTO SANCHEZ em recebê-lo prendia-se ã existôncia notória de culos entre BORGES e a cúpula do movimento revolucionário Tupac ru.	CIEX Nº	<b>060/</b> 86	DATA 30/MATO/1986	
<ul> <li>NAULAÃO B - 2</li> <li>REFERÍNCIA</li> <li>DALA DA ONTENÇÃO DO INFORME MAI/86</li> <li>DAVISÃO AC /Serviço Nacional de Informações.</li> <li>INDRE: Peru. Repressão ao terrorismo. Reunião dos Chefes de E -Maior das Forças Armadas do Peru e do Chile.</li> <li>1. Segundo consta, durante a recente Reunião de Che Estado-Maior das Forças Armadas do Chile e do Peru não se tratou qualquer ação coordenada com vistas a contrarrestar atividades teroristas na região de fronteira entre os dois países. As mesmas tes indicaram, no entanto, que se realizam contatos esporádicos tre os serviços de inteligência dos dois países. Não existe indí seguro de uma expansão de atividades terroristas nos Departamen de Taena e Moquegua, mas seria motivo de crescente preocupação Santiago a notória intensificação de movimentos do Sendero Lumin em Puno, inclusive com a formação de "sonas liberadas". Recentem te teria sido detectado importante tráfico de armas e explosivos fronteira Peru-Bolívia, que estaria alimentando a atuação sender ta em Puno. Há suspeita de que parte dessas armas venha da Amér Central (Nicarágua), mas ainda não se teria podido determinar segurança a fonte e trajetória do abastecimento externo de armas munições para os movimentos terroristas que atuam no Peru. É de recordar, a propósito, que, por ocasião da visita de TOMÁS BORGE Lima, chegou-se a mencionar que a negativa do Vice-Presidente L ALBERTO SANCHEZ em recebê-lo prendia-se à existência notória de culos entre BORGES e a cúpula do movimento revolucionário Tupac ru.</li> </ul>	NATUREZA :	Informe	ANEXO:	
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<ul> <li>Peru. Repressão ao terrorismo. Reunião dos Chefes de E -Maior das Forças Armadas do Peru e do Chile.</li> <li>1. Segundo consta, durante a recente Reunião de Che Estado-Maior das Forças Armadas do Chile e do Peru não se tratou qualquer ação coordenada com vistas a contrarrestar atividades t roristas na região de fronteira entre os dois países. As mesmas tes indicaram, no entanto, que se realizam contatos esporádicos tre os serviços de inteligência dos dois países. Não existe indí seguro de uma expansão de atividades terroristas nos Departamen de Tacna e Moquegua, mas seria motivo de crescente preocupação Santiago a notôria intensificação de movimentos do Sendero Lumin em Puno, inclusive com a formação de "zonas liberadas". Recentem te teria sido detectado importante tráfico de armas e explosivos fronteira Peru-Bolívia, que estaria alimentando a atuação sender ta em Puno. Há suspeita de que parte dessas armas venha da Amér Central (Nicarágua), mas ainda não se teria podido determinar segurança a fonte e trajetória do abastecimento externo de armas munições para os movimentos terroristas que atuam no Peru. É de recordar, a propósito, que, por ocasião da visita de TOMÁS BORGE Lima, chegou-se a mencionar que a negativa do Vice-Presidente L ALBERTO SANCHEZ em recebê-lo prendia-se à existência notória de culos entre BORGES e a cúpula do movimento revolucionário Tupac ru.</li> </ul>	DIFUSÃO	AC /Serviço Nacional de	Informações.	
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•	qualquer roristas tes indic tre os se seguro de de Tacna Santiago em Puno, te teria fronteir: ta em Pun Central	ntor das Forças Armadas d ação coordenada com vist na região de fronteira e caram, no entanto, que se erviços de inteligência d a uma expansão de ativida e Moquegua, mas seria mo a notória intensificação inclusive com a formação sido detectado important a Peru-Bolívia, que estar no. Há suspeita de que pa (Nicarágua), mas ainda nã a a fonte e trajetória do	as a contrarrestar ativida ntre os dois países. As me realizam contatos esporád os dois países. Não existe des terroristas nos Depar tivo de crescente preocupa de movimentos do Sendero de "zonas liberadas". Rec e tráfico de armas e explo ia alimentando a atuação s rte dessas armas venha da o se teria podido determin abastecimento externo do	ades te esmas f dicos e e indíc rtament ação Lumino centeme osivos senderi Améri nar c

**Appendix.** Evolution of the Centro de Informações do Exterior report structure (selected years): (a) 1966; (b) 1976; (c) 1986. These documents are publicly available.