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On the brink of world war



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After World War II (1939-1945) we have experienced two moments of tension on the verge of atomic war.

The first, in October 1962. On the 16th, John F. Kennedy, president of the United States, was informed that the CIA had evidence captured by U-2 spy planes, which in Cuba were built missile launch bases, installed by the USSR. Once the matter was confirmed, a "naval encirclement" was initiated on the island to prevent any entry of the Soviet fleet, which was heading to the island with weapons and equipment. In addition, the situation was denounced in the OAS for the knowledge of the countries of the continent, whose governments were convinced that the missiles could also reach national territories. In the midst of the Cold War, the US prepared for what looked like an imminent atomic war,

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which the USSR also assumed was possible. From the testimonies that have remained, it is known that J.F. Kennedy was pressured to launch the attack on the bases installed in Cuba and invade it, happily resisting to do so until the last moment. Nikita Khrushchev in the USSR remained unchanged, not stopping the Soviet advance, but equally expectant about American reactions. After 13 days of world tensions, the two heads of state reached an agreement: the USSR would dismantle the bases, in exchange for the US not invading Cuba. In secret agreement the US would also withdraw the missiles installed in Turkey. Humanity was saved.

In the midst of the crisis, Fidel Castro even proposed that Khrushchev should launch the atomic attack against the United States if Cuba was invaded and evidently destroyed. He also stressed that the US-USSR agreement was made without Cuban participation. But, years later, he recognized that a war of unsuspected proportions for humanity had been avoided. In any case, the end of the October Crisis had double repercussions in Latin America: on the one hand, Cuba was isolated and the blockade (embargo) against the island was strengthened, causing the revolutionary government to affirm its socialist path and greater ties with the USSR; but, on the other hand, the Cold War penetrated with more force throughout the region. The CIA's actions multiplied to destabilize and overthrow governments that did not align with US strategies; Likewise, the ideological and technical penetration into the Armed Forces was ensured to combat the "guerrillas" that, certainly, had exploded or were beginning in various countries and, in addition, to persecute everything that "communism" meant, understood as a fundamental threat to the continent. The level of dehumanization produced by the irrational anti-communism/anti-Castroism cultivated since this time, was experienced during the 1970s with the establishment of military dictatorships in the Southern Cone, which guided by the concepts of national security and "internal war", violated human rights, with disappearances, torture, murders and persecutions, never before seen in Latin American history and only comparable with what the Nazis did. during World War II. Inevitably, the military assumed to be the one called upon to rid society of "subversion" and "communism," defining the contradictions of Latin American political life exclusively in favor of the situation and interests of the dominant elites. And, through Plan Condor, they sought a militarist international that claimed a saving mission for society.

In the early 1960s, Ecuador was one of the most backward and "underdeveloped" countries in Latin America, so that thanks to the *developmentalism* of that decade and especially of the 70s, it achieved its definitive capitalist road, which included some

industrialization. The Cuban Revolution (1959) was shocking and divided society. But anti-communism was refinedly inculcated in multiple ways. In fact, President José María Velasco Ibarra (1960-1961) was an admirer of the Cuban process and did not want to break with the island. He was overthrown. The successor, Carlos Julio Arosemena Monroy (1961-1963), who also did not want to break with Cuba, was forced to do so after a military barracks; but months later he was deposed by a coup d'état that installed a Military Junta born of the actions of the CIA, which executed the persecution of "communism", although it never reached the level of what would happen, for example, in Chile or Argentina in the 70s. Paradoxically, that Junta executed the developmentalist program linked to the Alliance for Progress, which the backward Ecuadorian oligarchy and bourgeoisie branded as "communist."

The other moment of tension has occurred in 2022, as a result of the war in Ukraine, following the "special military operation" of Russia, which began in February. The historical roots of this conflict have different scopes if you want to go to the remote past, but today it has to do with both the aggressive advance of NATO towards the East since 2014, as well as with the reactions and geostrategies of Russia, and even the formation of a new world in which the traditional unipolar hegemony of the US loses historical ground before the advance of multipolarity, in which the People's Republic of China is also directly involved, as the largest rising power.

On this occasion, the geostrategic conflict, either by unilateral hegemony or by multipolarity between the great powers, is far from the interests of Latin America. However, the region tries to be dragged into a single monorist type behavior, to align itself with the interests of the US and NATO (<https://bit.ly/3F5fjCK>). Unlike the past, today's Latin America is no longer the same as it was in the Cold War era and anti-Castroism. The countries have restored relations with Cuba and only the United States maintains an unprecedented and unjust blockade, which contravenes its proclaimed thesis of "an international order based on rules", since since 1992 the UN itself has voted, annually, against the US embargo on Cuba, without its resolutions being complied with.

But the international situation in the region is difficult with neoliberal governments capable of falling into the new "Americanist" subordination (<https://bbc.in/3f08Dem>). At the same time, the armed forces have been directly summoned to face the new "threat" posed by China and Russia to the continent, at the "South American Defense Conference" (Southdec) held in Ecuador in mid-September 2022, with the participation of the

commander of the US Southern Command, Laura Richardson (<https://bit.ly/3dfaMIB>). Other progressive governments want to preserve internal sovereignty and Latin Americanism, they do not consider Russia or China as their "threats", although they clearly condemn the Ukraine-Russia war. At the same time, they do not align, but propose peace as a result.o essential principle of the region. In fact, the definition of Latin America as a region of peace is broad, a principle that appears in various Constitutions, such as that of Ecuador, in which Article 5 explicitly provides: *Ecuador is a territory of peace. The establishment of foreign military bases or foreign facilities for military purposes shall not be permitted. It is forbidden to cede domestic military bases to foreign armed or security forces.*

Consequently, faced with the risk that the war in Ukraine will unleash an atomic confrontation between the powers involved, Latin America is the region that can best advocate international peace, without falling under geostrategic definitions alien to its realities and interests.

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