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6 The international dimensions of democratization

The case of Argentina

Andrés Malamud

Introduction

Argentine politics are usually described as eccentric, or at least unconventional, for a number of reasons. Economically, Argentina was a rich country that went from wealth to bankruptcy over a period of about 70 years, between 1930 and 2001. Socially, it has always had the most developed middle class and the most educated population in Latin America, a region where strong middle classes and universal education are extremely rare. Politically, it saw the emergence and predominance of rather autochthonous political movements, which included the most relevant and elusive example of Peronism. Internationally, it was the country in the Western Hemisphere that most frequently opposed American foreign policies apart from Cuba, although it never sided openly with either Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union. Argentina has been one of the most economically developed and one of the least politically stable countries in Latin America, a paradox first explained by Guillermo O'Donnell in the 1970s.[1] In spite of all these particularities, the cycles of Argentine politics since 1930 can be matched with international developments taking place at the time. This chapter argues that both the frequent democratic breakdowns and processes of re-democratization that followed were linked to international factors.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, it describes the cycles of political instability in Argentina from 1930 to the present, tracing their relations with the international context. Second, it analyzes the democratization process that took place during the 1980s in order to single out the international factors that had an influence upon it. Third, it examines the ways in which Argentina's renewed democracy has affected its international environment, especially focusing on the region where it is embedded – the Southern Cone of South America.

International context and political cycles in Argentina

There were six *coups d'état* in Argentina between 1930 and 1976. The literature usually interprets them as the outcome of internal rifts that pitted rival civil-military alliances against one another. To be sure, none of the coups was the result of direct intervention by a foreign power, as was frequently the case in Central America; neither did they entail an indirect but strong involvement of external actors, such as U.S. support for the ousting of Chilean president, Salvador Allende. And yet, the cycles of regime instability in Argentina can

hardly be understood without reference to the international context: the sequence and substance of the coups closely followed world – and more clearly, regional – events of the time.

The first two coups were rooted in nationalistic, proto-fascistic movements. In 1930, the leaders of the takeover espoused an anti-liberal, corporatist organization of state and society, much as Benito Mussolini did for Italy, and Getúlio Vargas would for Brazil some years later. The military officers that took power in 1943 were likewise rebelling against the alleged pro-Allied stance of the governing coalition and its presidential candidate, Robustiano Patrón Costas. The aftermath of both coups was unexpected: in the first instance, the nationalists were quickly overridden by the liberal rebel wing, which governed until 1943 under the guise of constitutional government but through electoral fraud; in the second case, the revolution was swallowed by its own son. Juan Domingo Perón, the man initially chosen to garner mass support for the dictatorship, became a popular leader and the founder of one of the most enduring political movements in Latin America. These later developments notwithstanding, the timing of the democratic breakdowns paralleled the global decline of liberal democracy and the rise of nationalistic movements that characterized the interwar period.

The next two coups were of a different nature. They were both oriented against Peronism – by then the new hegemonic movement – and both legitimated themselves as the forces that would combat the tyranny of Perón to restore full constitutional authority. In both cases, the military were divided and internal struggles prevented them from accomplishing their plans. In 1955, the president that ousted Perón and forced him to exile was displaced after only two months in power, given his allegedly soft stance against Peronism; and the 1962 putsch failed even before it was consummated: internal divisions and lack of coordination left the leaders of the coup out in the cold, as the constitutional succession was cleverly managed after the resignation of the civilian president and before his would-be military successor was able to take the oath of office. Both these coups were justified according to a liberal rhetoric, and held up the United States and its Latin American foreign policy as the beacon of anti-authoritarianism, both globally and in Argentina.

Finally, the latter coups were again very different. This time, both aimed not to restore traditional society or a desecrated Constitution but rather to uproot past political practices and sectoral groups and to transform Argentine society into a new authoritarian polity. Although they were within the "western" fold, the ensuing military governments were not western in their lack of attachment to human rights and the rule of law. The overthrowing of two constitutional governments – first in 1966 and then in 1976 – was part of a regional wave of bureaucratic-authoritarian coups. The first one had taken place in Brazil in 1964, putting an end to a convulsive period of democratic rule, and the other two took place in 1973, when the democratic presidents of Chile and Uruguay were ousted from power. The time frame and various key policies implemented by the

new authoritarian rulers of all these countries were similar. As a result of the ideological proximity of Southern Cone military forces, these dictatorships implemented similar economic policies and developed similar plans to combat terrorism and its allegedly subversive communist source in particular. The details of Operation Condor, the name given to this regionally coordinated repressive plan, have yet to come to light fully because of its clandestine nature; however, its very existence shows that regime change in the region was not an isolated, exclusively domestic, phenomenon; on the contrary, there was clearly a mechanism of contagion at work, and cooperation among members and supporters of these authoritarian regimes made these new Latin American dictatorships resemble a connected archipelago rather than independent islands.

The similarities noted above should not lead one to conclude that the dictatorships of the Southern Cone were all allies: they were rivals as much as friends. Nationalistic political traditions, old-fashioned military education and training, historical territorial disputes and economic tensions frequently obscured common authoritarian goals and gave rise to serious conflicts that, sometimes, verged on open war. This was the case of the Argentine-Chilean conflict over the Beagle Channel, which led to the deployment and amassing of troops on both sides of the Southern border separating the two countries. In December 1978, only the intervention of Cardinal Samoré, the papal envoy, prevented the hostilities from breaking out. This "schizophrenic" relationship between the dictatorships in the sub-region can be understood in two ways: on the one hand, military governments regarded national interests as being in conflict, at least in foreign policy terms; on the other hand, they also perceived a common threat to the stability of their regimes and were thus eager to cooperate in the sphere of internal security. So, while foreign policy drove them apart, domestic policy (regime preservation) brought them together. Awareness of a shared political destiny in terms of regime was transmitted from dictatorial rulers to their democratic successors in the Southern Cone.[2] While all six countries of the sub-region lived under authoritarian rule in 1980, by 1990 they were all democracies – or at least well on the way to being democratic.

International factors supporting democratization

The Argentine path from military rule towards free elections can be divided into three phases. The first began in mid-1981, when President Roberto Viola decided to soften restrictions prohibiting political party activity and took steps – albeit minor ones— to liberalize the regime. The second occurred between the ousting of Viola by hardliner Leopoldo Galtieri (who intended to halt liberalization) in December 1981 to the military defeat at the hands of the British in the Malvinas-Falklands war on 14 June 1982. The last phase was presided over by General Reynaldo Bignone, and consisted of an accelerated process lasting a year and a half, starting with modest liberalization, continued with the convocation of national elections and a free electoral campaign, and culminated in the victory of the party most inimical to the dictatorship and the inauguration of a democratically elected president. Generally, the influence of international

factors is only acknowledged for the intermediate period of the transition process, but there are reasons to believe that the other two were also influenced by the international context and the intervention of foreign actors.

During the first phase, as early as 1977 and even before initial liberalization, there is well documented pressure by top U.S. administration officials and the U.S. Congress itself on the military government over human rights.[3] What is less well known is the significance of international human rights networks in preserving the life of top political activists. They did so by raising the public international visibility of potential victims of repression and thus raising the cost of government decisions to incarcerate or abduct key figures. As difficult to gauge as this factor is, the fact is that this "international protective umbrella" shaped the behaviour of the actors involved, giving them some limited but larger room to manoeuvre than they would have had otherwise.[4] More important, it may have saved their lives.

The second phase was triggered by an indisputable international phenomenon, and unfolded according to its evolution: the Falklands War. Sovereignty over the southern islands had been disputed by the British and Spanish (and the Argentines after independence in 1816) for over two centuries, but they had been in British hands since 1833 after the seizure of an Argentine military garrison. Argentina had renewed its diplomatic claim to the islands in 1964 at the United Nations (UN), but had failed to move the British who continued to claim sovereign rights over the territory. A violent showdown had never been considered seriously by any of the parties. This changed after the ousting of General Viola. In early 1982, as the government faced growing unrest due to deep economic troubles (soaring inflation, declining output and plummeting wages[5]), as the unions gathered support against government economic policy, and as street revolts spiralled out of control, the military Junta decided to seize the islands in order to deflect public anger onto a foreign enemy and gain domestic support. Grasping at a minor excuse, Argentine troops invaded the islands on April 2, 1982. Initially, the plan seemed to work: the invasion was almost bloodless and the Argentine people rallied behind the government. The Junta strategy was based on two main assumptions: that the United States would not interfere in a quarrel between two allies, and that the British would opt not to go to war over such an unimportant and distant territory.[6] This mistake was soon compounded by others, including a defective combat strategy, poor military training and successive diplomatic blunders. Thus, on June 14, just 72 days after the invasion, the Argentine field commander was forced to sign an un-negotiated cease-fire, a euphemism for unconditional surrender. More than 600 Argentines died in the conflict, and the days of the regime that had sent them to their deaths were numbered.

The consequences of defeat for the Argentine dictatorship are now clear, but they are twofold rather than linear: on the one hand, the ignominious outcome helped to bring down the regime by definitely weakening the hardliners and igniting a palace crisis, as a consequence of which the three military

branches split, with the Army running the government and then managing the transition in isolation; on the other hand, the military adventure provoked the withdrawal of support for the regime from both the U.S. government and Argentines at home. This implies the presence of two factors, acknowledged in the literature as favourable to democratization: control and consent, in the words of Laurence Whitehead.[7] The former refers to the fact that the dominant power in the Western hemisphere no longer backed an unreliable dictatorship that had attacked its most loyal ally, which sent an encouraging signal to democratic forces; the latter refers to the fact that domestic support for the government was no longer available after what were parallel economic and military catastrophes. The regime was doomed; democracy, however, had yet to emerge.

After a first phase of failed liberalization and a second phase of aborted authoritarian re-emergence, the third phase of the transition paved the way for a proper democratization process. In this period international influence was not always evident, but it manifested itself nonetheless in two ways. There was mounting international and particularly western pressure on the military government to hold prompt, free and fair elections as a condition for Argentina to overcome its semi-pariah status. And opposition forces were influenced positively by the example provided by the transitions to democracy a decade earlier in Southern Europe. Particularly inspiring for soon to be democratic leaders was the trial of the Greek colonels, as well as the Spanish "Moncloa Pact."[8]

During 1983 the weakness of the government increased proportionally to the popularity of the presidential candidate of the Radical Civic Union (*Unión Cívica Radica*l, UCR), Raúl Alfonsín. The UCR was a traditional party, proud of its autochthonous origins and idealistic philosophy, with some leaders who even took pride in never having been abroad. Alfonsín, by contrast, was pragmatic and open-minded and considered himself and his party as natural members of the international social democratic family of parties. He was well connected with foreign leaders, both politicians and human rights activists, and was regarded by them as a modern, democratic leader. But he was not expected to win: Italo Luder, the candidate of the Peronist Party (*Partido Justicialista*, PJ) – the party that had won every fair election since its foundation in the 1940s – was considered the frontrunner by most observers. He was close to traditional nationalistic positions and to the outgoing government in particular, as evidenced by his refusal to abolish the preventive amnesty decreed by Bignone covering all military personnel. Alfonsín rejected the self-amnesty and went a step further, denouncing a secret pact between the military and the labour unions, the latter closely linked to the PJ. Finally, on October 30, 1983, the elections were held under close international scrutiny. Alfonsín garnered 52 percent of the vote, and Luder peaked at 40 percent. The unambiguousness of the result and the lack of authority of the government sped up the transfer of power, and on December 10, 1983 Alfonsín inaugurated the current democratic period –which has been the longest in Argentine history.

Although Alfonsín was sworn into office without controversy and even though he enjoyed both constitutional legitimacy and broad popular support, the democratic transition was not yet over. Alfonsín himself was well aware of this, openly calling his administration "a transition government."[9] The new regime owed its existence to the power vacuum caused by the military collapse in the Falklands, and not to victory over former regime forces. It had to build its strength against the encroachment of many antagonists, many of them military officers, who were simply waiting for an opportunity to manifest their hostility openly. The new democracy was tested by a series of putsches between 1987 and 1990, and in order to survive it needed to avoid international isolation, which would certainly ensue with a successful coup.

The first uprising, in the Easter week of 1987, saw a group of military rebels led by Lieutenant Colonel Aldo Rico taking control of a series of barracks in protest against the prosecution of military officers for human rights crimes. The rebellion was formally driven by a sectoral claim (protecting the lower ranks from prosecution in accordance with the principle of due obedience), but yielding to the demand would have had consequences familiar to anyone with a modicum of familiarity with Argentine history: every administration that had previously acquiesced to military claims had faced successive, incremental demands culminating in a coup. In this instance, the military officers declaring their loyalty to the new civilian government were unwilling to open fire against their comrades, which meant that the constitutional authorities had to garner non-violent domestic and international backing. The rebellion was finally put down, but the government was obliged to make concessions for which the incumbent party would pay a significant price.

Taking advantage of lenient house arrest conditions, Aldo Rico led a second rebellion in 1988. Again unable to persuade loyal military forces to repress the rebels, the government had to seek a negotiated agreement to end the mutiny. Rico was confined again, but by then there was a general impression that the government was incapable of keeping the armed forces under control. This was confirmed with the Villa Martelli revolt of December 1998, led by the charismatic Colonel Mohamed Seineldín. Once again, the administration quelled the rebellion without resorting (and unable to resort) to force. While it was clear that the military rebels had neither domestic nor international support, it was also evident that the democratic authorities were unable to discipline the armed forces, and it was only two years later, with the electoral victory of Carlos Menem and the PJ in 1989, that a fourth and final revolt was violently crushed by loyal officers on 3 December 1990. The latter event marked the end of the transition, as the rules of the game were now definitely constitutional and democratic, and there was no room for uncertainty regarding the state's monopoly on violence. After 60 years of regime instability, two factors had helped to consolidate democracy: the unity of domestic democratic political forces, and the unrestricted support of foreign powers, particularly regional neighbours and the U.S.

The International Effects of Democratization

Argentina still faced either unsolved conflicts or grave tensions with three countries – Chile, Brazil and the United Kingdom – after the 1983 transition. Further, it badly needed to regain an honourable international reputation, which meant restoring friendly ties with the U.S. The new administration understood that peaceful international reinsertion was not just an end in itself, but also a means to downplay the significance and influence of the military at home. Alfonsín's strategy was based on three main pillars: bilateral peace with Chile, regional integration with Brazil, and multilateral international diplomacy. This section explores these issues.

Chile

Relations with Chile were strained for three main reasons: human rights, the pro-British position adopted by the Pinochet regime during the Falklands dispute, and the persistence of the Beagle conflict.[10] As the former was a domestic matter and the second the indirect consequence of a problem involving a third country, it was the Beagle that became the hottest issue on the bilateral agenda. Alfonsín went as far as to define it the "number one priority" of his administration.[11] The first step to solve the conflict was the signature of a Declaration of Peace and Friendship at the Vatican on January 23, 1984 (barely two months after the inauguration of democratic rule), which expressed the intention to reach a fair and honourable solution through exclusively peaceful means. The treaty had detractors on both sides of the Andes, but the political context differed in each country: whereas nobody doubted the capacity of Pinochet to enforce the agreement, Alfonsín faced the hostility of the PJ, the main opposition party, which was only one senator short of holding a majority in the upper chamber, the body with the constitutional responsibility of approving international treaties.

In an attempt to overcome the nationalist obstruction, Alfonsín and Foreign Minister Dante Caputo resorted to a popular consultation (usually called a referendum but not actually binding for the executive or the Senate). The administration hoped to project the image of a reasonable government respectful of international agreements.[12] Besides making a clear cut with the wretched impression left by the dictatorship, this image was considered as an asset in any later global disarmament initiatives and negotiations over the Falklands. Certainly, the rationale was that the Argentine people would vote positively and that, in the absence of such explicit support, the agreement would have been defeated in the Senate. As this complex scenario shows, Alfonsín resorted to a domestic policy (the call for a referendum) to gain support for a foreign policy initiative that would, in turn, reinforce his position vis-à-vis other domestic and international actors. And, as Alfonsín saw it (quite correctly), in those troubled times the strengthening of his administration was directly related to the consolidation of democracy. The referendum was held on November 25, 1984 and turnout exceeded 70 percent for what was a non-mandatory election, which is unusual in Argentina. The vote in favour of the agreement outnumbered those

against it by more than 4 to 1. Two years and a half after having massively supported the attack on the Falklands, the Argentines were ready to support democracy and the peaceful resolution of international conflicts. On November 29, 1984, the foreign ministers returned to the Vatican to sign the Treaty, as foreseen by the Declaration 10 months earlier. The agreement fixed territorial limits in the disputed zone and established procedures for the resolution of future disagreements. A commission was also created to foster economic cooperation and develop projects of physical integration. After heated debate, the Treaty was approved by the senate with just one vote of difference. Notwithstanding the close result, the mutual ratification of the Treaty in May 1985 signalled the end of a historical rivalry dating back to the nineteenth century. Since the Chilean return to democracy later in 1990, the bilateral relations have become ever stronger and minor skirmishes have diminished over time.

Brazil

In contrast with Chile, historical relations with Brazil have been distant rather than hostile. While there were two occasions in which there could have been open war with Chile over the last 150 years (in 1898 and in 1978), the last war with Brazil dates back to 1828.[13] Reciprocal mistrust between the two countries was expressed in a "pretended" mutual ignorance. The shared border was as clearly delimited as it was politically neglected, physical connections were mostly absent, and trade and investment interdependence virtually nonexistent. The advent of democracy in both countries permanently changed the nature of the bilateral relations. Indeed, the Argentine-Brazilian axis became the core of what was later the most successful process of regional integration ever in Latin America, the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). The process that led to its foundation was launched in mid-1980s with the transitions to democracy. Democracy hence became a key goal and an indispensable condition for regional agreements.

The first steps towards regional cooperation had been taken in 1979, under the Videla and João Figueiredo military presidencies. That year both countries, together with General Ströessner's Paraguay, signed a trilateral agreement on the Paraná Basin, which settled various disputes over water resources, including the inconvenience and perceived threat to Argentina of the construction of the giant Itaipú Dam.[14] A second crucial phase was ushered in by the Falklands War: it boosted confidence-building and the emergence of a shared perception of world politics.[15] Despite its reluctance to support the use of force, Brazil explicitly endorsed Argentina's right to the islands. This coincided with the position of most of Latin America (excluding Chile), but it was particularly significant because Brazil was not only the mightiest Latin American power but also Argentina's traditional rival. However, it was only in the mid-1980s that the new democratic leaders initiated the third stage, which ultimately gave rise to lasting cooperation covering issues ranging from economic matters to the sensitive question of nuclear power. Elected in 1983 and 1985 respectively,

Alfonsín and José Sarney engaged in a process that would have been unlikely to succeed without their strong commitment. In 1985 they signed the Declaration of Foz de Iguazú, which laid the bases for future integration and created a High Level Bilateral Commission to foster that process. The crucial Argentine-Brazilian Integration Act was endorsed in July 1986 in Buenos Aires, and set in motion the Argentine-Brazilian Integration and Cooperation Program (PICAB). As was later broadly acknowledged, the latter constituted a turning point in the history of bilateral relations, and was the embryo of the MERCOSUR. Within the framework of these treaties, between 1984 and 1989 both countries signed 24 bilateral protocols to promote bilateral trade. There were agreements that included even military cooperation and the mutual inspection of their nuclear installations.[16] This historical shift occurred largely as a result of the newly appointed democratic presidents and their decision to adopt a new regional policy. Arguably, neither the pressures of globalization nor democratization by themselves would have sufficed to overcome a history of mutual distrust. A further Treaty on Integration, Cooperation and Development was signed in 1988. Seen as a culmination of the process of mutual recognition and confidence building, it became just another step towards ever closer ties. At the end of 1990, Argentina and Brazil signed an Agreement on Economic Cooperation that systematized and deepened pre-existing trade agreements. That same year, representatives of both countries met with Uruguayan and Paraguayan authorities, which also wanted to participate in the integration process. The result was an agreement to establish the four-nation MERCOSUR with the March 26, 1991 Treaty of Asunción. Although not inexorable, this was the outcome of the regional process of democratization.

Excursus on *how democracy paved the way for regional integration*

The rapprochement between Argentina and Brazil was not automatic. There were few incentives to change the traditional pattern of mutual indifference. To account for regional cooperation, therefore, it is necessary to understand the new democratic context, institutional resources and the personal preferences that drove and shaped the process.[17] The first bilateral agreements were based on political rather than economic reasons, although economic cooperation was the main instrument.[18] The primary goal was to protect the new democracies and diminish the domestic role of the military, which led to the attempt to limit external threats. The private sector had little influence during the first stages of integration and trade agreements were simply political instruments to bring the neighbours closer together and discourage rivalry. Carlos Márcio Cozendey, former Director of the Itamaraty MERCOSUR Division, supported this view: "the process initiated in 1985-1986 had a clear political motivation that was apparent in the direct intervention of the presidents; but the instruments used to accomplish the political goals were commercial."[19]

Despite widespread consensus regarding the aims of early initiatives, there is some disagreement over what kept the process going. On the one hand, a key protagonist, Dante Caputo, affirms that Brazil has always saw the

MERCOSUR as a platform for enhanced insertion in the political and international arena, while Argentina tended to have a double standard, seeking ties with Brazil for trade reasons but aligning with the U.S. on political and military issues.[20] On the other hand, an equally crucial actor, Brazil's former undersecretary of regional integration José Graça Lima, presents a more tempered view of the divergence, stating that "the reasons for the rapprochement between the two countries was mainly political [given the] level of confrontation [that existed] a short time before."[21] Regardless of the divergence over the goals of association, the main protagonists acknowledge the primacy of democratic politics. Alfonsín recalls that, "when President Sarney and I launched the process of integration together, the political meaning of the project was very clear."[22] The view that the economy was instrumental was also clear:

> President Sarney liked Argentina, understood its needs and was ready to make significant gestures […] His first measure as president, in 1985, was precisely to import 1.3 million tons of wheat in order to reduce the trade deficit that Argentina had with Brazil.[23]

In part because of the subjectivity of the actors, who tend to magnify the significance of their personal role, it is hard to establish the origins of the idea of strengthening ties between the two countries. Peña believes it is possible that the talks between the newly elected presidents began with Alfonsín and Tancredo Neves, before the inauguration of Sarney.[24] Unfortunately, Neves died before he would express his view of regional integration, but his attitude towards good neighbourly relations with Argentina was clear. Unlike other Brazilian scholars, Mónica Hirst says that the initiative "was Argentine rather than Brazilian, but Sarney rapidly became enthusiastic about it."[25] She believes that some objective conditions fostered the process, but emphasizes political issues (i.e. democracy), timing, and personal disposition rather than economic criteria. She notes that the initial economic conditions were terrible for integration, and that is not surprising that the first moves were in the foreign policy sphere. This shaped the integration process for a long time, as it has remained highly politicized and dependent upon presidential will ever since.[26] Julio Sanguinetti, the first post-authoritarian Uruguayan president, also underlines the importance of regime change: "the democratization process of the 1980s generated an atmosphere of proximity among countries, and of solidarity among the democratic leaders that emerged after the period of military rule."[27] Strengthening ties between the Southern Cone countries was also a historical and personal challenge. Sanguinetti expresses pride in the fact that, for him, "integration, as a concept, is the homily of a lifetime." His claim cannot be overlooked, as his regional vocation is widely recognized as a significant element in the push towards increasing cooperation in the Plata Basin region. As Alfonsín acknowledged, "the accession of Uruguay to the MERCOSUR was an outcome of the intelligent impetus of President Julio Sanguinetti."[28]

The sense of supporting a common cause among the presidents was crucial. Sanguinetti recalls that

> there was a natural empathy [with Alfonsín] that existed from when we first met at the time of the struggle against the dictatorships; and later we found Sarney, with whom we had no previous relationship but who soon pleasantly surprised us.[29]

He also notes that Sarney won the respect of his peers

> because he made a great effort to understand the culture of the Rio de la Plata, to learn and give his speeches in Spanish when he visited our countries, and because he was a man of culture with a remarkable knowledge of history and an open mind.[30]

Under Sanguinetti's leadership, Uruguay played a key role in the Argentine-Brazilian relationship. In his words, it served "to articulate [the relationship], like a hinge of sorts." This "hinge" or buffer state mediated and moderated tensions as they arose. He understood "the presence of Uruguay as a catalyst, something that gave negotiations between Argentina and Brazil a multilateral character." The trilateralization of the negotiating process was acknowledged with the presidential Declaration of Alvorada of April 1988, which established the conditions for the incorporation of Uruguay. With the ousting of General Stroessner in 1989 and the rise to the presidency of military officer Andrés Rodriguez, Paraguay finally also began its transition to democracy, which set the stage for the closure of ancient rivalries and opened the door to lasting regional cooperation.

The United States and the United Kingdom

In addition to settling regional disputes and launching an ambitious process of regional integration, democratic Argentina needed to seek a reconciliation with two world powers with which it had had strained relations during the last years of dictatorship: the United States and the United Kingdom. Reconciliation can be divided into two stages: the first under Alfonsín in 1983 signalled the end of any attempt to use violence to reach political goals. At this stage, however, relations with U.S. remained cordial but distant, and there were no diplomatic relations with Britain as the British refused to discuss the sovereignty issue; the second stage began under Menem in 1989, and was characterized by much closer relations with both countries, eventually leading to close alignment with the U.S. and restoration of diplomatic relations with Britain.

In 1983, the new democracy was at a crossroads. No matter how much progress it made in any given area of domestic or international politics, to "reposition the nation in the world arena" the administration had to define its relations with the U.S.[31] Alfonsín and Caputo aimed to restore the relations with the hemispheric power damaged by the Falklands War and international drift, but they also wanted to maintain an independent stand to allow for the development of a foreign policy based on universal principles rather than national interests. This produced intermittent confrontational postures vis-à-vis

the United States. An eloquent example of the search for a principled autonomy was the creation of the Group of Six (G6) in 1984, an awkward group bringing together countries as dissimilar as Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden, and Tanzania. The Group aimed to campaign in favour of disarmament and against nuclear proliferation, advocating the transfer of military resources to social development. However, the fact that not all the members of the group were wholly democratic was never frankly addressed, and this limited the moral impact of the endeavour. Further, the international arena is not dominated by newly-born domestic regimes but by national states with historical continuity, so Alfonsín's best intentions and outstanding prestige were never sufficient to overcome the burden of Argentina's past, including its long authoritarian history and changing alignments.

In 1989, the new administration made a dramatic turnabout. Menem, seconded in the foreign ministry by Domingo Cavallo and then Guido Di Tella, decided to put an end to all remaining disagreements with the U.S. and adopt a "realist" (one of "capitulation" according to the opposition) policy. In the words of a specialist,

> whereas the Alfonsín government sought to distance itself from the United States to prove itself independent and autonomous, the Menem government […] attempted the reverse: to prove itself to be in league with the United States, its fate linked to that of the US.[32]

This policy was rhetorical and involved concrete concessions as well, two of the latter particularly remarkable: the deactivation of the project to develop a missile, Condor II, and the decision to send two naval vessels to join the blockade of Iraq in 1991. Argentina thus dissociated itself from neighbouring Brazil and Chile, which not only carried on with their missile projects based on domestic technology but also refused to send troops to the Gulf. In fact, Argentina was the only Latin American country to do so, and the decision was taken without even consulting Congress. After 1999, when Menem left the presidency, Argentine foreign policy continued to twist and turn with every passing president. Although democracy is firmly in place and war seems impracticable, the country has yet to define a steady policy towards the U.S. and, by extension, in world affairs.

Somewhat surprisingly, relations with Britain have not been as twisted as those with the U.S., although this is due more to the inflexible stance of the British rather than to a stable, bipartisan Argentine policy. In fact, the official position over the Falklands changed greatly between the Alfonsín and Menem presidencies, but British rigidity meant that this change made little difference. It was a rigidity that was tough for the new democracy: as Tulchin suggests,[33] the failure of the Alfonsín administration to shift the British reduced the political manoeuvrability of the government. The Falklands issue was a constant thorn, contributing to feed the claims of nationalists on the left and right and arguably emboldening the rebels in the Easter rebellion of 1987. Notwithstanding the later

"make nice" strategy promoted by di Tella towards the islanders, the British never accepted discussion of sovereignty. This intransigence was somewhat sidelined by the Menem administration when it accepted the restoration of diplomatic relations and the negotiation of all other issues while freezing the sovereignty debate. In this way, the democratic regime was able to deal with the bitterest and most sensitive issue of its foreign agenda without risking its stability and public legitimacy. If "democratic consolidation" means anything, it certainly applies to a country in which a democratic regime manages to overcome several putsches, endure multiple government turnovers and accept dramatic reversals of its most sensitive foreign policy issues.

Conclusion

In the two decades following the start of the most recent process of democratization, the Southern Cone has undergone two historical changes: first, at the domestic level, its larger countries enjoy a degree of democratic stability never attained before; second, at the international level, they have developed such strong ties with each other that the likelihood of a military conflict in the region seems to have been completely eradicated. Regional integration is an unfinished process but there is a security community in place for the first time in history.[34] Did democracy foster peace and cooperation or was it the other way around? As argued above, the answer is that they reinforced each other. The shift from rivalry to cooperation was an outcome of policies undertaken by democratic governments, whose stability was, in turn, supported by the peaceful transformations of the intra-regional relations. Hence, the MERCOSUR can be understood as a creature of democracy as well as a creator – or at least protector – of democracy.

The international context shaped the Argentine transition in many ways. The four main factors acknowledged in the democratization literature (i.e. control, contagion, consent and conditionality) played a role, although not all of them developed simultaneously or with the same degree of influence. The end of dictatorship was provoked, if not by the direct *control* of a foreign power, by a disrupting *event* brought about by defeat in an international war.[35] *Contagion* was also evident, as signalled by the simultaneity with which most countries in the region turned to democracy and by the processes of cooperation and mutual democratic reinforcement they engaged in. Complementarily, domestic *consent* and popular support for democracy was widespread for the fist time since 1930, encompassing the UCR and the PJ, elites and masses, domestic entrepreneurs and foreign investors. This consensus was the consequence of the twin military and economic catastrophes produced by the dictatorship, which fed the perception that authoritarian governments were ill-suited to rebuild the country. Finally, *conditionality* was a constant, if less marked, presence, particularly in the critical moments of military rebellion. By making it clear that Argentina would become an international pariah if an authoritarian reversal took place, international actors such as foreign governments, businesses and NGOs

contributed greatly to shift the domestic relation of forces in favour of democratic players.

The effects of Argentine democratization on the international context through a renewed foreign policy were equally important: its most relevant outcomes were the pacification of relations with Chile and the solution of all remaining border disputes; the rapprochement with Brazil and the establishment of the MERCOSUR; the restoration of diplomatic relations with Britain; the improvement of relations with the U.S.; and the solid entry into the western, democratic, and capitalist international camp. Argentina still faces daunting challenges today, particularly economic reconstruction and social reparation, but in contrast with most of the last century, democracy is seen as a condition and not an obstacle to tackle those challenges.

Notes

[1] Guillermo O'Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic-Authoritarianism*. Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1972.

[2] The Southern Cone includes Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and – if politics rather than geography is the criterion – Bolivia.

[3] Cynthia Brown (ed.), *With Friends like These: The Americas Watch Report on Human Rights and U.S. Policy in Latin America*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985, pp. 99-100.

[4] In particular, human right activists believed that this was the reason why Alfonsín had been spared by the dictatorship. Author interview (AI) with Aldo Etchegoyen, Bishop of the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina and human rights activist, in 1982.

[5] David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1982: From Spanish Colonization to the Falklands War*. London: IB Tauris, 1987.

[6] For more detailed accounts of the Falklands War, see: Max Hastings and Simon Jenkins, *The Battle for the Falklands*. New York: Norton, 1983; and Óscar Raúl Cardoso, Ricardo Kirschbaum, and Eduardo Van der Kooy, *Malvinas, la trama secreta*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana-Planeta, 1983.

[7] Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

[8] Raúl Alfonsín, *Memoria política. Transición a la democracia.* Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2004.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Carlos Escudé and Andrés Cisneros, *Historia general de las relaciones exteriores de la República Argentina*. Buenos Aires: GEL, 2000.

[11] Bruno Passarelli, *El delirio armado. Argentina-Chile: La guerra que evitó el Papa*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1998, p. 241.

[12] Roberto Russell, *Política exterior y toma de decisiones en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: GEL, 1990, pp. 54-55.

[13] Argentina and Brazil fought another war later, only as allies: together with Uruguay, they attacked and defeated Paraguay in the Triple Alliance War that ended in 1870.

[14] Celso Lafer, "Relações Brasil-Argentina: alcance e significado de uma parceria estratégica," *Contexto Internacional* 19 (2) 1997: 249-65.

[15] Ibid. See also: Andrea Oelsner, "Two Sides of the Same Coin: Mutual Perceptions and Security Community in the Case of Argentina and Brazil," in: Finn Laursen (ed.), *Comparative Regional Integration: Theoretical Perspectives*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003; and Félix Peña, *Momentos y perspectivas: La Argentina en el mundo y en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Editorial UNTREF, 2003.

[16] Along with the main Treaty the presidents signed a Joint Declaration on Nuclear Policy. For more details on nuclear cooperation, see: Mónica Hirst and Héctor E. Bocco, "Cooperação nuclear e integração Brasil-Argentina," *Contexto Internacional* 5 (9) 1989: 63–78.

[17] The following account on relations with Brazil and the MERCOSUR draws on Andrés Malamud, *Presidential Democracies and Regional Integration: An Institutional Approach to Mercosur, 1985-2000,* unpublished PhD dissertation, European University Institute in Florence, 2003. The citations in this chapter with no references to sources are author interviews (AI) conducted between 2000 and 2001. Full references are provided in the abovementioned thesis.

[18] Luiz Olavo Baptista, "Mercosul: Instituções, linhas mestras, rumos," in: *O novo multilateralismo. Perspectiva da União Europeia e do Mercosul*, Forum Euro-Latino-Americano. Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais. Lisboa: Principia, 2001.

[19] Author Interview (AI) with Carlos Márcio Cozendey, in Andrés Malamud, *Presidential Democracies*, op. cit.

[20] AI with Dante Caputo, in ibid.

[21] José Alfredo Graça Lima, in ibid.

[22] Raúl Alfonsín, "La Integración Sudamericana: Una Cuestión Política," *Síntesis FUALI* 9 (24), 2001, pp. 3.

[23] Ibid., p. 4

[24] AI with Félix Peña, in Andrés Malamud, op. cit..

[25] AI with Monica Hirst, in ibid.

[26]Andrés Malamud, "Presidential Diplomacy and the Institutional Underpinnings of Mercosur. An Empirical Examination," *Latin American Research Review* 40 (1), 2005, pp. 138-164.

[27] AI with Julio María Sanguinetti, in Andrés Malamud, op. cit.

[28] Raúl Alfonsín, op. cit., p. 3

[29] Julio María Sanguinetti, op. cit.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Joseph S. Tulchin, "Continuity and Change in Argentine Foreign Policy," *Latin American Nations in World Politics*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996, p. 169.

[32] Ibid, p. 169.

[33] Ibid., p. 180.

[34] Andrea Oelsner, op. cit.

[35] Philippe C. Schmitter, "The Influence of the International Context upon the Choice of National Institutions and Policies in Neo-Democracies," in: Laurence Whitehead (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 35.