

The Alfonsín Administration and the Promotion of Democratic Values in the Southern Cone and the Andes*

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Abstract. This article seeks to demonstrate the need to incorporate the international component of political strategy into analysis of the behaviour of democratising elites, a standpoint that too often has been neglected in democratisation theory. It explores a little-known aspect of Argentina's foreign policy that took place under the stewardship of the transitional democratic administration of President Raúl Alfonsín (1983–1989). Specifically, it reveals that the first-freely elected administration that followed the Proceso military dictatorship articulated and implemented a strategy that aimed at defending and promoting democratic values in relation to Argentina's Southern Cone and Andean neighbours. Argentine bilateral relations with Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia, and Chile are analysed through this analytical standpoint. It is argued that the Alfonsín government pursued such a policy out of a blend of fear for its own perpetuation and principled beliefs about the value of democracy as a mode of governance.

With a country with new institutions, democracy and development, Argentina will bring a significant contribution to establish a more secure and fair international system... Bearing this idea in mind, I would like to make clear that our foreign policy will coherently mirror our domestic politics... We will seek social justice for Argentines and will not cease to look for ways to establish within the international system some aspects of morality and justice between nations. We will strive for peace for our violence-ridden territory and will seek peace for all inhabitants of this planet. We will seek freedom and democracy for the Argentines, with the resoluteness that provides the traumatic experience of living under authoritarianism and repression. We will fight for freedom and democracy throughout the world.

Excerpt from President Raúl Alfonsín's inaugural speech on 10 December 1983.¹

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¹ Ministerio de Información Pública de la República Argentina, *Discursos de su excelencia Presidente Raúl Alfonsín del 10 de diciembre 1983 al 23 de marzo 1984* (Buenos Aires, 1985), p. 45.

Since the 1970s, scholars have paid considerable attention to the means through which domestic politics advances or impedes the consolidation of democracy in Latin America and elsewhere. The emphasis on internal factors can easily be understood since the most important determinants of the success or failure of any democratisation process are located in the complex reconstruction of state-society relations making international factors generally secondary in importance.² While some in-depth investigations have been conducted on the role and impact of the international dimension in helping or hindering the initiation of transitions to democracy in Latin America, there is a clear shortage of research about what Geoffrey Pridham has called the ‘outer-inner’ and ‘inner-outer’ linkages in the field of democratisation studies.³ Most analysis of the interplay between external factors and democratisation processes leaves us in the dark regarding the role of international variables in the design of comprehensive strategies of consolidation by democratising elites.⁴ It is, then, unsurprising that recent work has stressed the need to pay more attention to this dimension of the study of regime change from authoritarianism to democracy.⁵ Interest in investigating the international components of strategies of consolidation should

² L. Whitehead, ‘International Aspects of Democratisation’, in Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives* (Baltimore, 1986), part 4, pp. 3–4. In a more recent essay, Whitehead somewhat modified his viewpoint because of what he perceived as the ‘heightened prominence of international influences apparent in many cases of regime transitions’. See L. Whitehead, ‘East Central Europe in Comparative Perspective’, in Geoffrey P. Pridham et al., *Building Democracy? The International Context of Democratisation in Eastern Europe* (London, 1994), p. 32.

³ G. P. Pridham ‘International Influences and Democratic Transition: Problems of Theory and Practice in Linkage Politics’, in Geoffrey P. Pridham (ed.), *Encouraging Democracy: the International Context of Regime Transition in Southern Europe* (London, 1991), p. 4.

⁴ For an excellent summary of the state of the literature and methodology in relation to the international dimension of democratisation see Pridham, ‘International Influences’, pp. 1–28; ‘The International Dimension of Democratisation: Theory, Practice and Inter-regional Comparison’, in Geoffrey P. Pridham et al., *Building Democracy? The International Dimension of Democratisation in Eastern Europe* (London, 1994), pp. 7–31 and ‘The International Context of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective’, in Richard Gunther et al., *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore, 1995), pp. 166–203.

⁵ Recent pleas for an increased attention to the international dimension within the analysis of democratisation processes were voiced by G. P. Pridham, ‘The International Context’, p. 167 and ‘The International Dimension’, pp. 7–31; J. J. Linz and A. Stepan, ‘Actors and Context’, in Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (eds.), *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore, 1996), p. 73; L. Whitehead, ‘Three International Dimensions of Democratisation’, in Laurence Whitehead (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Consolidation: Europe and the Americas* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 4–25.

be reinforced by a growing recognition of a correlation between regime change, the implementation of principled beliefs and ideas, and foreign policy formulation.⁶

This article seeks to address this challenge by examining how the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR) administration of President Raúl Alfonsín integrated the international dimension into its strategy of consolidation in Argentina between 1983 and 1989. It will detail how the UCR administration's foreign policy implemented a series of initiatives that aimed at defending and promoting democratic values in relation to Argentina's Southern Cone and Andean neighbours. The discussion of the UCR administration's efforts to diffuse democratic values highlights the underestimated role of the international dimension in what is generally perceived as an overwhelmingly domestic process of societal transformation.

Although understudied, the impact of the international dimension on regime change from authoritarian to consolidated forms of democratic governance has been acknowledged for some time in the literature, and the link was explicitly recognised by some theoretical and empirical works that surveyed the Southern European and Latin American experience during the twentieth century's three waves of democratisation.⁷ The

⁶ For works stressing the correlation between domestic regime change, as embodied in democratisation processes, and foreign policy restructuring see Marcelo Lasagna, 'Las Determinantes Internas de la Política Exterior; Un Tema Descuidado en la Teoría de la Política Exterior', *Estudios Internacionales*, vol. 28, no. 111 (1995), pp. 387–409 and 'Cambio Institucional y Política Exterior: un Modelo Explicativo', *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, vol. 32 (1996), pp. 45–64. On the role and impact of principled beliefs in the national interest and foreign policy articulation see Emanuel Adler and Peter M. Haas, 'Epistemic Communities, World Order, and the Creation of a Reflective Research Program', *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 1 (winter 1992), pp. 367–390. See also essays in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane (eds.), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Belief, Institutions, and Political Change* (Ithaca, 1993); M. Marks, 'The Formation of European Policy in the post-Franco Spain: Ideas, Interests, and the International Transmission of Knowledge', unpubl. PhD diss., Cornell University, 1993.

⁷ For references about the role of the international dimension in Latin America during the 'first' and 'second' waves of democratisation see essays in Leslie Bethell and Ian Roxborough (eds.), *Latin America Between the Second World War and the Cold War: Crisis and Containment* (Cambridge, 1993); A. Lowenthal, 'The United States and Latin American Democracy: Learning from History', in Abraham Lowenthal (ed.), *Exporting Democracy: the United States and Latin America* (Baltimore, 1991), pp. 363–406; T. Smith, *America's Mission: the United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 60–112; R. M. Thorp, *Latin America in the 1930s: the Role of the Periphery in World Crisis* (Oxford, 1984). For specific references on the impact of international actors in Southern Cone and Southern European transitions to democracy during the 'third' wave see Alan E. Angell, 'La Cooperación Internacional en Apoyo de la Democracia Política en América Latina: el Caso de Chile', *Foro Internacional*, vol. 29, no. 4 (1989), pp. 215–45; E. Baylora, *Comparing New Democracies: Transitions and Consolidation in Mediterranean Europe and the Southern Cone*

demise of the Soviet bloc at the end of the 1980s has created further stimulus for research about possible linkages between international variables and attempts at democratic consolidation.⁸ These studies have concluded that once in power, Southern and Eastern democratising elites sought, with various methods and degrees of success to guarantee the stability of democratic institutions and practices through their interaction with an international community which, since the end of the Cold War, has displayed an increased eagerness to assist them. In retrospect, initiatives such as Portugal's granting of independence to its African colonies, and the integration of the newly democratised Southern and former Soviet satellites into the European Community and NATO, all seem to have been manifestations of deliberate efforts by democratising elites to exploit the international dimension.

As a number of Argentine specialists acknowledge, the Alfonsín administration is a case of regime change that underwent foreign policy restructuring to promote/protect the country's nascent set of democratic institutions.⁹ The Alfonsín administration's foreign policy platform was strongly inspired by the UCR's idealist frame of reference in international

(Boulder, 1987), pp. 15–25; Francesco Bayo, 'La Democracia en la Política Latinoamericana de España,' *Síntesis*, no. 21 (July–December 1994), pp. 75–104; T. Carrothers, *In the Name of Democracy: US Policy toward Latin America in the Reagan Years* (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 117–96; Carlos Luján, 'Europa y Estados Unidos en la Democratización Uruguaya: Cooperación Internacional y Relaciones Bilaterales', *Estudios Internacionales*, vol. 27 no. 105 (1994), pp. 129–61; Geoffrey P. Pridham (ed.), *Encouraging Democracy*; Laurence Whitehead (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Democratization*.

⁸ A useful reference on the role of the international dimension in transitions to democracy in Eastern Europe is E. Herring, 'International Security and Democracy in Eastern Europe', in Geoffrey P. Pridham et al., *Building Democracy?* pp. 87–118. In-depth studies of the impact of international actors within the democratisation process of a former Eastern European people's republic are T. Carrothers, *Assessing Democracy Assistance: the Case of Romania* (Washington, 1996); K. F. Quigley, *For Democracy's Sake: Foundations and Democratic Assistance in Central Europe* (Baltimore, 1997).

⁹ See Dieter Nohlen and Mario Fernández, 'Democratización y Política Exterior: Análisis Comparado en Torno a Tres Casos: Argentina, Brazil y Uruguay', *Estudios Internacionales*, vol. 24, no. 94 (1991), pp. 229–59; Carlos Pérez-Llana, 'Relaciones Internacionales y Transición Política', *Estudios Internacionales*, vol. 19, no. 73 (1986), pp. 3–15; Roberto Russell, 'Los Ejes Estructurantes de la Política Exterior Argentina', *América Latina/Internacional*, New Series, vol. 1, no. 1 (winter), pp. 5–29; Alberto Van Klaveren, 'Variables Externas en los Procesos de Democratización en América Latina', *Contribuciones*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1986), pp. 19–40 and 'Democratización y Política Exterior: el Acercamiento entre Argentina y Brasil', *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, vol. 20 (1990), pp. 13–44.

relations particularly the Kantian-inspired German philosopher Karl Christian Friedrich Krause.¹⁰ In his writings, Krause advocated an anthropomorphic philosophy that posited the development of humanity as the main focus of political activity. In his view, democracy at the internal level and liberal international principles in foreign policy were two complementary and mutually reinforcing elements. Krause's liberal internationalist prescription had been wholeheartedly adopted by Argentine Radicals and had become the trademark of the UCR's worldview since its foundation in 1890. Thus, it was likely to be a decisive influence in the way the Alfonsín administration would shape its foreign policy after its victory at the polls.¹¹

The importance of emphasising the interplay between the domestic and international dimensions also stems from the fact that, since the start of the authoritarian cycle in the 1930s, successive military regimes attempted to transform Argentina's foreign policy into an instrument for legitimising and perpetuating their practices and rules.¹² Under these circumstances, the UCR administration saw it as vital to reshape the country's international relations in a direction that would be compatible with the requirements of building a consolidated democracy and would neutralise any threat to the democratisation process itself.¹³ Indeed, as a specialist of

¹⁰ Karl Christian Friedrich Krause was born at Eisenberg in 1781 and died in Munich in 1832. Like several of his contemporaries, Krause claimed to be developing the true Kantian position. In Krause's view, the ideal community is governed by the concept of right, which he defines as the organic whole of all of the internal and external conditions necessary for the completion of life that are dependent on freedom. In this view, the rights of individuals, groups, and nations can be recognised but only as subordinates to the Humanity as a whole. While not very influential in Germany, Krause's philosophy found considerable support in Spain and in Latin America at the end of the nineteenth century, coinciding with the time the UCR was founded. For biographical references on Krause see Paul Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, vol. IV (New York, 1967), pp. 363–4.

¹¹ On Krause's philosophy and its influence on the Alfonsín administration's foreign policy platform see K. C. F. Krause, *The Ideal of Humanity and Universal Federation* (Edinburgh, 1900), pp. 90–133; A. B. Bologna, *Dos modelos de inserción en el mundo: las presidencias de Alfonsín y Menem*, Documento de trabajo, Centro de Estudios en Relaciones Internacionales, Universidad de Rosario, 1991, pp. 15–19.

¹² References on Argentine foreign policy being transformed into an instrument of authoritarian legitimisation can be found in R. Bernal Meza, *Cooperación y conflicto en la política exterior latinoamericana: dos enfoques* (Mendoza, 1989), p. 26; J. Paradiso, *Debates y trayectoria de la política exterior argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1993), pp. 173–4; Carlos Pérez-Llana, 'La Política Exterior de la Argentina post-Malvinas', *Estudios Internacionales*, vol. 15, no. 59 (1982), pp. 410–25; Roberto Russell, 'Argentina y la Política Exterior del Régimen Autoritario (1976–1983) una Evaluación Preliminar', *Estudios Internacionales*, vol. 17, no. 66 (1984), pp. 170–5; J. M. Vázquez Ocampo, *Política exterior argentina 1973–1983: de los intentos autonómicos a la dependencia* (Buenos Aires, 1989).

¹³ The perception of a threatening interplay between international factors and the fate of the democratisation endeavour was clearly stated by Alfonsín himself in *Abora, mi propuesta política* (Buenos Aires, 1983), pp. 103–5.

Argentina's international relations observed, the *alfonsinista* foreign policy design responded to specific challenges emerging from what he called the 'first phase of the transitional process'.¹⁴ The link between the UCR's political project for Argentina and its foreign policy was clearly explained in an interview Foreign Affairs Minister Dante Caputo gave to the Argentine newspaper *La Nación*:

We have to rebuild our country after decades of instability. This is a complex challenge. However, no doubt it is even more complex because the form that we have adopted to redress the situation corresponds to a particular model. We have chosen to work for the organisation of a democratic society... In this perspective, the way that Argentina inserts itself into the world plays a fundamental role. Notably because external linkages will serve to integrate the democratic memory of the world into Argentina in a kind of accelerated apprenticeship of democratic forms... The type of international linkage and the efficiency with which we will be able to develop it are fundamentally important for the attainment of our internal objectives. Therefore, our foreign policy is articulated so as to strengthen our democratic system through an increase in our political autonomy in the international system, the incorporation of democratic values in our network of social relations, and the creation of conditions for the modernisation and improvement of our economic structures.¹⁵

The international component of the Alfonsín administration's strategy of democratic consolidation, which has been labelled by the UCR foreign policy team itself as the 'Twenty Fronts' and 'Membrane' strategies, became one of the main facets of Argentina's foreign policy from 1983 to 1989, especially during the initial period of the Alfonsín administration.¹⁶ In the mind of the *alfonsinista* foreign policy team, both the 'Twenty Fronts' and 'Membrane' strategies functioned as filters of the impact of international events while simultaneously allowing the domestic system to be permeated by positive elements conducive to the consolidation of democracy in Argentina. The first element of both the 'Twenty Fronts' and 'Membrane' strategies consisted of an activist posture by Argentina, seeking alliances and cooperation with other states interested in creating 'democratic fronts' in the international system.¹⁷ In addition, both

¹⁴ Russell, 'Los Ejes Estructurantes', p. 5.

¹⁵ *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 14 Aug. 1985). (my translation).

¹⁶ The importance of protecting the nascent democratic project through Argentina's foreign policy was clearly spelled out *post facto* by Dante Caputo in 'Informe, Línea Conceptual y Hechos Fundamentales de la Política Exterior del Radicalismo (1983–1989)', mimeo, 1990. Caputo reconfirmed this feature when he said that, in his view, 'the main foreign policy objective the UCR administration sought was to protect Argentina's nascent democratic institutions; a concern which carried an especially potent weight until 1987'. Author's interview with former Foreign Affairs Minister of Argentina Dante Caputo Nov. 1995, Buenos Aires.

¹⁷ Caputo, 'Informe y Línea Conceptual', pp. 8–10.

strategies included a strong normative component aiming at the defence and promotion of democratic values conducive to deepening Argentina's adhesion to constitutional politics and protection against potential coups. Striking examples of the two operational components could be observed in the Alfonsín administration's insistence on reshaping Argentina's relations with Western European countries, specifically in its successful attempts to incorporate cancellation clauses in cooperation treaties concluded with Spain in 1987 and Italy in 1988 to counter the possibility of a democratic interruption.¹⁸ The dual feature was equally discernible in initiatives that aimed to convince Argentina's Southern Cone and Andean neighbours either to inaugurate a process of democratisation or, when inaugurated, to enhance the viability of newly-established democracies in these states.

The UCR's liberal internationalist foreign policy in the Southern Cone and the Andean Region

Despite the euphoria when Alfonsín was inaugurated as president, a clear feeling of threat existed within the UCR government about the viability of the country's democratic institutions. Authoritarian practices might have been discredited but the most difficult part of the task of consolidating democratic institutions was still ahead, and the country's democratic future perspectives looked bleak when the UCR took over in December 1983.

For the UCR administration, perceptions of a regional threat came from two distinct, yet related elements. First, the Alfonsín administration launched its redemocratisation efforts when most neighbouring countries were still ruled by military regimes. It was feared that the region's authoritarian outlook could entice backward-looking sectors within the Argentine armed forces to draw on neighbouring authoritarian regimes to try to relegitimise their beliefs, values, and ultimately, return to power. Active support from these potentially hostile neighbours might help authoritarian-inclined elements to derail the Argentine democratisation

¹⁸ Graciela Fernández, 'Las Relaciones Bilaterales Especiales de la Argentina', *América Latina/Internacional*, vol. 5 (Jan.–March 1988), p. 162; R. Russell, 'Política Exterior de la Argentina en 1988: La Prioridad de la Agenda Económica', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de políticas exteriores latinoamericanas* (Buenos Aires, 1989), p. 17. On the UCR administration policy in relation to the four Western European 'pillars' see R. Russell, 'From Videla to Alfonsín, the Domestic Sources of Argentina Foreign Policy Sources', unpubl. PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1993, pp. 228–52; D. Fournier, 'The International Dimension of Democratic Transitions: Argentina and Chile', unpubl. PhD diss., Oxford University, 1996, pp. 131–45.

experiment, especially since most authoritarian regimes in the region were themselves under pressure to liberalise or to launch processes of democratic transition. The perception that democratising Argentina was ‘under siege’, due to a hostile regional environment, appears to have been shared by the UCR foreign policy team as a whole:

Undoubtedly, one of the main focuses of articulation in our foreign policy, at least during the initial period of the administration, dealt with our constant preoccupation to consolidate our democratic institutions which we perceived as weak and threatened by internal and external forces ... The context in which we came to power in 1983 has to be remembered. Argentina was surrounded by countries in which possibilities of democratisation were either remote or very fragile. Bolivia had a fragile democratic government since 1982; Uruguay was liberalising but had not yet started its own transition process. Similarly, Brazil had already begun to liberalise but we perceived this process as fragile and leaving too much power to the military. In Paraguay and Chile respectively, Stroessner was leading a sultanistic regime while Pinochet was firmly entrenched in power. We were besieged, and we did not like it as this situation could encourage sectors within our own population that had no respect for democracy, despite their proven incompetence, to seek to regain power.¹⁹

In this context, the ‘Twenty Fronts’ and ‘Membrane’ strategies became integral parts of Argentina’s foreign policy towards its Southern Cone and Andean neighbours. Relations with these countries became characterised by a strong liberal internationalist outlook aimed at disseminating democratic values in the region. The first manifestation of this concern within the *alfonsinista* foreign policy was observable in the dramatic alteration of the nature of Argentina’s relations with its most powerful neighbour: Brazil.

Relations between Argentina and Brazil during the Alfonsín administration

An important reason behind the change in relations with Brazil can be found in the fact that, from March 1985, both countries were led by democratising elites who shared a belief that they needed a foreign policy to strengthen and integrate their respective strategies of consolidation. Argentina and Brazil, under the administration of Presidents Alfonsín and Sarney, began to build a binational community whose normative *modus operandi* and *raison d’être* were based upon the existence and the strengthening of democratic institutions and practices. This innovative aspect within the Argentine–Brazilian bilateral relationship manifested

¹⁹ Author’s interview with former Chairperson of the Argentine Congress’ Lower House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Federico Storani, Nov. 1993, Buenos Aires.

itself through the emergence of intensified foreign policy cooperation at the political level, and by a sustained effort at economic integration.

The cooperative trend between Argentina and Brazil represented a dramatic reversal in the nature of the bilateral relationship which had hitherto been characterised by low intensity and deep suspicion. Distrust ran high between the two countries before the democratic thaw of the mid-1980s because Argentina and Brazil, particularly under authoritarian rule, tended to cast their perceptions about bilateral relations into a zero-sum game, based upon geopolitical considerations moulded by military thinking.

Although the first manifestation of bilateral rapprochement took place when military regimes were still in power, the near-simultaneous reinstallation of democratising administrations marked the beginning of a new relationship. The election of the candidate of the democratic opposition in Brazil, Tancredo Neves, to the presidency created an environment highly conducive to improving bilateral cooperation. The Alfonsín administration had supported Neves' campaign and expected cooperation between the two countries to be bolstered by his victory.²⁰ These expectations appear to be fulfilled when President-elect Neves made an official visit to Argentina in February 1985, when it became clear that both leaders shared views about the link between the international environment, and Neves seemed willing to engage in a rapprochement with Argentina in order to pursue the consolidation of regional democracies.²¹ Understandably then Neves' untimely death in April 1985, and his replacement by José Sarney stirred immediate fears in the Alfonsín administration about the future of political cooperation and economic integration with Brazil.²²

Sarney was not trusted by Alfonsín's foreign policy team, which argued that the new president belonged to a sector of the Brazilian oligarchy that could attempt to detain, or even derail, the democratisation process in his

²⁰ According to Dante Caputo, several meetings took place between the Alfonsín administration and members of the Brazilian democratic opposition, including Tancredo Neves the leader of the *Partido da mobilização democrática brasileiro*, Ulisses Guimarães, and the leader of the *Partido trabalhista democrático*, Leonel Brizola, before the democratic reinstallation of March 1985. Interview with Dante Caputo, Nov. 1995, Buenos Aires. One written statement of support by the UCR administration to Tancredo Neves was reported in *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 11 Sept. 1984).

²¹ *Clarín, La Nación*, (Buenos Aires, 5–8 Feb. 1985). Neves made clear during his visit that he shared with President Alfonsín strong concerns about the external debt, the Central American conflict, and the North–South dichotomy. He also stressed that increased cooperation with Argentina on these matters seemed to be part of the solution for their eradication and democratic stability in the Americas.

²² On the UCR administration's initial reaction to Neves' death see *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 23 April 1985).

own country.²³ Consequently, the Alfonsín administration adopted a wait-and-see position before pursuing further rapprochement with Brazil, but it soon became apparent that *alfonsinista* apprehensions were ill-founded and that the new Brazilian president was committed to eliminate those problems slowing consolidation of democracies in the Southern Cone and Western hemisphere. This concern was especially discernible in Brazil's behaviour in relation to issues such as the East-West conflict, the Central American conflict, and the external debt crisis.²⁴ The window of opportunity to enhance bilateral cooperation became especially noticeable when the two presidents met at Iguazú at the end of November 1985 and agreed to a specific set of actions to promote *in tandem* political cooperation and economic integration.²⁵ Many commentators agree that a strong concern for democratic protection in both Argentina and Brazil was pivotal to achieving the Iguazú agreement, which was subsequently embodied in the Argentine-Brazilian July 1986 integration treaty.²⁶ The presidential joint statement introducing the treaty stressed that one of the primary purposes was to help 'to consolidate democracy as a way of life and system of government' through enhanced economic integration.²⁷ Former Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Sabato outlines the rationale behind this treaty.

²³ Raúl Alconada Sempé stressed that the UCR administration had been 'devastated' by Neves' death. In his opinion, this could have meant a serious setback to efforts at bilateral rapprochement. Suspicions about President Sarney's links with the oligarchy and some military sectors largely explained this attitude. Interview with former Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister of Argentina Raúl Alconada Sempé, Nov. 1993, Buenos Aires.

²⁴ On Brazil's foreign policy during the Sarney administration see M. Hirst, 'La Política Exterior Brasileña en 1984: Una Visión desde Brasil', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Las políticas exteriores latinoamericanas frente a la crisis* (Buenos Aires, 1985), pp. 31–39; 'Profundización de la Política Exterior Democrática', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Políticas exteriores latinoamericanas para sobrevivir* (Buenos Aires, 1986), pp. 15–36; 'La Política Exterior del Brasil en 1986' in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de Políticas Exteriores Latinoamericanas: continuidad y cambio* (Buenos Aires, 1987), pp. 43–67; M. Hirst and M. Segré, 'La Política Exterior del Brasil en Tiempo de Crisis', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de Políticas Exteriores Latinoamericanas: un balance de esperanza* (Buenos Aires, 1988), pp. 35–49 and M. Hirst, 'Política Exterior del Brasil en 1988: los Avances Posibles', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de Políticas Exteriores Latinoamericanas: a la espera de una nueva etapa* (Buenos Aires, 1989), pp. 32–48.

²⁵ *Clarín, La Nación*, (Buenos Aires, 30 Nov. and 1 Dec. 1985). The full text of the Iguazú declaration can be found in *Integración Latinoamericana*, 'Declaración de Iguazú', vol. 11, no. 114 (April–May 1986), pp. 64–66.

²⁶ See Mónica Hirst and Roberto Russell, 'Política Exterior y Democratización: el Caso de Brasil y Argentina', *Estudios Internacionales*, vol. 20, no. 80 (1987), p. 447; Luigi Manzetti, 'Argentine-Brazilian Economic Integration: An Early Appraisal', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 25, no. 3 (1990), p. 111.

²⁷ *Clarín, La Nación*, Buenos Aires, 29–30 July 1986. The full text of the Argentine–Brazilian economic integration treaty can be found in *Integración Latinoamericana*, 'Acta para la Integración Argentino-Brasileña', vol. 11, no. 116 Sep.–Dec.(1986), pp. 97–104.

In January 1984 we started discussions with Itamaraty [the Brazilian foreign affairs ministry] on the issue of economic integration. They were not so keen at the beginning, but there has been a sharp reversal coinciding with the coming to power of Sarney. From that moment onwards, they expressed the opinion that a community between Argentina and Brazil would protect democracy in both nations. They stressed the examples of the Spanish, Portuguese, and Greek post-authoritarian administrations which speeded up the integration process with the European Economic Community (EEC) because they believed that it was inconceivable that a EEC member be led by fascists. Consequently we always had this parallel between the EEC role and its influence upon the democratisation of Southern Europe in mind. But there was more than that; it was simply out of question that EEC members return to dictatorships. The 1981 attempted coup in Spain partly failed because if it had succeeded, the EEC would have intervened to quell the process. We believed that the creation of a political and economic community between Argentina and Brazil could play the same role: a cooperative binational regime would contribute to the elimination of the risk that our respective states eventually return to the hands of the military.²⁸

Presidents Alfonsín and Sarney were convinced that, with a common democratic project to articulate, their polities possessed converging political interests which could be expressed through cooperation in the international arena. As some authors have suggested, political motivation preceded a strict economic rationale in the minds of both administrations for furthering the institutionalisation of the bilateral relationship.²⁹

The 1986 integration treaty was seen as instrumental to delegitimise the so-called ‘hypothesis of conflict’ within the Argentine and Brazilian doctrines of national security that had been critical to foreign policy conceptualisation and legitimising authoritarianism during periods of military dictatorships. It was therefore no coincidence that the integration treaty was geared at enhancing cooperation in strategic matters. The treaty opened the door to a fundamental reinterpretation of the way both Argentina and Brazil defined their national security interests, in relation to each other, as well as their respective doctrines of national security – a dramatic change that can be observed in some protocols of the treaty that deal with strategic and security areas. Up to that point bilateral cooperation on such issues was seen as unconceivable.

More specifically efforts to enhance inter-military cooperation can be observed in the dedication of a whole section of the treaty to bilateral

²⁸ Interview with former Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister of Argentina Jorge Sabato, Oct. 1993, Buenos Aires. Sabato pointed out that Caputo repeatedly stressed that political cooperation and economic integration with Brazil was the key for the creation of a democratic community in the Southern Cone.

²⁹ Daniel Chudnovsky and Francisco Porta, ‘On Argentine-Brazilian Economic Integration’, *CEPAL Review*, no. 39 (1989), p. 115; Mónica Hirst and Miguel Langyel, ‘Integración Argentino-Brasileña: un Paso Histórico’, *Cono Sur*, vol. 5 (Jan–March 1986), p. 2.

aeronautical and nuclear cooperation, two sectors that were considered ultra-sensitive and highly strategic. The 1986 treaty began a major reversal of the dynamics of mutual suspicion by bringing the aeronautical sectors of the Argentine Ministry of Defence and the *Empresa Brasileira de Aeronautica* together in cooperative production of aircraft for both the military and civilian markets.³⁰ This was complemented by confidence-building measures aiming at eliminating suspicions between the two national military institutions, such as an annual series of symposiums inaugurated in April 1987, to identify common strategic interests and to build bonds between the two armies.³¹

Even more spectacular was the move towards bilateral nuclear cooperation. Before March 1985, strong military opposition in both countries made it politically impossible to implement the commitment of nuclear cooperation concluded by Presidents Videla and Figueiredo in May 1980.³² The November 1985 declaration marked a watershed on this issue, endorsing the peaceful utilisation of nuclear energy while promising a closer cooperation in this field between the two countries. These efforts were consolidated by the creation of a Joint Working Ministerial Group and a group commissioned to improve cooperation between the Argentine and Brazilian nuclear industrial sectors.³³

Cooperation was subsequently deepened by the incorporation into the 1986 integration treaty of a protocol to secure bilateral assistance in case of a nuclear emergency in one country.³⁴ In December 1986 the two countries agreed to set up a system of reciprocal inspections and safeguard techniques of the other country's nuclear facilities, marking the first institutionalisation of confidence-building measures between the two countries.³⁵ The bilateral security regime was symbolically boosted in July 1987 and November 1988 by the visits of Sarney to the Argentine nuclear plant of Picalniyeu and the Ezeiza radio chemical laboratory to increase Brazil's confidence in the non military purposes of the Argentine nuclear

³⁰ Eduardo Ganá, 'Tendencias en la Integración Latinoamericana: el Caso de Argentina y Brasil', *Cono Sur*, vol. 7 (Jan–March 1988), p. 6.

³¹ The economic, political, and strategic impacts of the 1986 integration treaty in relation to the democratisation process were specifically examined by the Argentine and Brazilian military establishments during symposiums held in 1987 and 1988. On this see Manzetti, 'Argentine–Brazilian Economic Integration', p. 139.

³² J. C. Casarales, 'Goals in Argentine–Brazilian Nuclear Cooperation', in Paul Lewenthal and Sharon Tanzeri (eds.), *Averting a Latin American Arms Race: New Prospects and Challenges for Argentine–Brazilian Nuclear Cooperation* (New York, 1992), pp. 48–49.

³³ Mónica Hirst, 'Brasil y las Relaciones con Argentina: Primeros Síntomas de Acercamiento Estable', *América Latina/Internacional*, vol. 2 (Nov–Dec. 1985), p. 33.

³⁴ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 1 Dec. 1985; 30 July 1986).

³⁵ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 11 Dec. 1986).

programme. These visits were reciprocated, in April 1988, by an official tour by Alfonsín of Brazil's Aramar nuclear plant.³⁶

A second set of linkages between democratic protection and the Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement can be found in what could be labelled as a set of 'economic incentives'. The UCR administration was convinced that economic integration with Brazil possessed a symbiotic relationship with the protection of the democratic project in Argentina. In fact, the *alfonsinista* administration firmly believed that democratic consolidation in Argentina was intimately linked to good performance by democratic institutions in the economic sphere; the 1986 treaty was partly founded on the assumption by the UCR government that better integrated economic relations with Brazil could help to revitalise Argentina's declining economy.³⁷ Indicative of the extent of change in terms of economic integration are the treaty's initial protocols which sought to promote economic liberalisation and contained preferential treatment clauses to stimulate trade and investment. It also included mechanisms to promote a balanced bilateral trade, notably through the purchase of Argentine wheat by Brazil and by the creation of a compensation mechanism in cases of serious trade imbalances or unfair practices.³⁸ This pattern could subsequently be observed in the signature in 1987 and 1988 of additional protocols to extended cooperation to areas such as steel production, communications, maritime transport regulation, petrochemicals, and science and technology.³⁹ The list of protocols increased to 24 by the time President Alfonsín left office in July 1989.

³⁶ Roberto Russell, 'Argentina: las Relaciones con los Socios Privilegiados', *América Latina/Internacional*, vol. 6 (Jan–March 1989), p. 221; R. Russell and G. Fernández, 'La Política Exterior Argentina en 1987: Aspectos Sobresalientes', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de políticas exteriores de América Latina y del Caribe: un balance de esperanzas* (Buenos Aires, 1988), p. 24.

³⁷ Hirst and Langyel, 'Integración Argentino-Brasileña', p. 5. Manzetti, 'Argentino-Brazilian Economic Integration', p. 110; M. Wilhelmy von Wolff, 'La Política Exterior Argentina en 1986: Prestigio, Reformas y Conflictos', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de las políticas exteriores latinoamericanas y del Caribe: Continuidad en la crisis* (Buenos Aires, 1987), pp. 33–35.

³⁸ Hirst and Langyel, 'Integración Argentino-Brasileña', pp. 3–4; Manzetti, 'Argentino-Brazilian Economic Integration', pp. 117–18; Wilhelmy von Wolff, 'La Política Exterior Argentina', pp. 34–5.

³⁹ R. Russell, 'Política Exterior de la Argentina en 1988: la Prioridad de la Agenda Económica', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de políticas exteriores latinoamericanas y del Caribe: a la espera de un nueva etapa* (Buenos Aires, 1989), p. 17. For more details about the protocols created in 1987 and 1988 see 'Programa de Integración y Cooperación Económica entre la República de Argentina y la República Federativa del Brasil: Informe de la Comisión de Ejecución' *Integración Latinoamericana*, vol. 12, no. 129 (Nov. 1987), pp. 55–67; *Integración Latinoamericana*, vol. 14, no. 142 (Jan–Feb. 1989), pp. 76–87.

By that time it was far from being obvious that economic integration had been a success. Many within the Argentine business community and political circles openly criticised the treaty's lack of effectiveness in overcoming structural problems, noting its failure significantly to increase bilateral trade⁴⁰ or to offset the trade deficit with Brazil.⁴¹ There were also complaints that the treaty had created unclear rules on trade practices while the treaty's trade dispute mechanisms were seen by many as ineffective in protecting Argentine interests. In retrospect though, critics might have been too severe in their judgement. It should be remembered that many protocols had not yet been implemented, or had been active for such a short time that any kind of assessment on this aspect of Argentine-Brazilian bilateral relations was premature when the Alfonsín administration left office. The treaty's main accomplishment in the economic realm does not lie in an increase in bilateral trade but in the fact that it created the impetus and necessary nexus of institutions to allow for further regional integration in the Southern Cone through the creation of the Mercosur in 1991.

Beyond this, it is in the political and diplomatic areas that the 1986 integration treaty experienced its most remarkable successes. It created a dramatic reversal of the Argentine and Brazilian 'hypotheses of conflict' and the rejection of decades of suspicion and rivalry to establish the basis for long-lasting bilateral cooperation.⁴² By extension, the Declaration of Iguazú and the 1986 integration treaty made a significant contribution, to the deepening of the civilianisation process by strengthening the position of democratising elites in both countries. In short, the 1986 treaty was a vital contribution to stabilizing the strategic and political environments for the new Argentine and Brazilian democracies.

Argentine–Uruguayan Relations during the Alfonsín Administration

During the 1983 electoral campaign, and in the first days of his administration, Alfonsín repeatedly showed his contempt for the Uruguayan military regime, in particular through a series of meetings with representatives of the democratic opposition and notably the *Blanco* and *Colorado* parties.⁴³ Concrete support for a democratic transition in

⁴⁰ In absolute numbers, Argentine–Brazilian bilateral trade climbed from US \$1.106 billion in 1985 to US \$1.969 billion in 1989. Data from L. Manzetti, *Institutions, Parties and Coalitions in Argentine Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1993), p. 103.

⁴¹ Manzetti, 'Institutions, Parties', pp. 103–4.

⁴² Casarales, 'Goals in Argentine–Brazilian', p. 59; Manzetti, 'Argentine–Brazilian Economic Integration', p. 115.

⁴³ Accounts of the neighbouring military regimes' reactions to Alfonsín's election and inauguration can be found in *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 8 Nov. 1983) and *The New York Times*, (New York, 13 Dec. 1983 and 22 Jan. 1984). *Clarín and La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 2 March, 4 April, 1, 27 June, 11, 18 Aug., 12 Oct., 18 Dec. 1983).

Uruguay initially took the form of recurrent requests by the Alfonsín administration to the Uruguayan military regime to allow its lasting political enemy, *Blanco* leader Senator Wilson Ferreira Aldunate, to return from his London exile.⁴⁴ Later the UCR government decided to grant Ferreira Aldunate political asylum.⁴⁵ It has also been reported that Buenos Aires backed Ferreira Aldunate's clandestine return to Uruguay in June 1984 by providing him with the necessary authorisation and logistical support to sail to Montevideo.⁴⁶ Subsequently, the Argentine authorities harshly criticised the Uruguayan militaries when they arrested the *Blanco* leader, and repeatedly requested his release.⁴⁷ At the same time, the UCR administration maintained a flow of communication with other Uruguayan opposition leaders across the political spectrum, as illustrated by the meetings, in the midst of the Uruguayan presidential campaign, between Alfonsín, *Frente Amplio* coalition leader General Liber Seregni, and *Blanco* presidential candidate, Alberto Sáenz Zumarán, in which technical details of the transition to democracy were discussed.⁴⁸

There are also indications that Argentine diplomats were given specific instructions by Alfonsín himself to attempt mediation efforts between the various Uruguayan political parties to ease a transition to democracy. In fact, it has been alleged that there were frequent Argentine attempts to reduce differences between leaders about their respective roles and prerogatives in a post-authoritarian Uruguay.⁴⁹ It is certainly the case that

⁴⁴ *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 22–23 Dec. 1983; 12 Jan., 4 Feb. 1984); *Southern Cone Report* (London, 3 Feb. 1984).

⁴⁵ *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 27 April 1984).

⁴⁶ *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 18 June 1984).

⁴⁷ *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 19–21 June, 2, 22 July 1984). Support by the Alfonsín administration for Ferreira Aldunate became even more obvious in the weeks following his arrest. The Argentine president sent roving ambassador, Senator Hipolito Solari Yrigoyen, to Uruguay to become one of the lawyers defending the *Blanco* leader during the trial the military authorities held against him after his return to Montevideo.

⁴⁸ *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 30 Oct. 1984); *Southern Cone Report* (Buenos Aires, 12 Oct. 1984).

⁴⁹ Federico Storani and Raúl Alconada Sempé, suggested that the then Argentine ambassador to Uruguay, Carlos Perette, had received direct orders from President Alfonsín to engage in a kind of 'shuttle diplomacy' between leaders of the *Blanco* and *Colorado* parties to reach an agreement about participation in the military plebiscite, and to establish rules for the functioning of democracy after the military's exit from power. The Alfonsín administration equally provided support to a meeting between leaders of the Uruguayan democratic opposition, which took place in the Argentine city of Concordia, during the first part of 1984 to alleviate problems in the transition to democracy. The Uruguayan military regime officially protested about these interferences. As the two officials recalled, the Alfonsín administration denied these accusations at the time, but the military's suspicions in Montevideo were generally well founded. Author's joint interview with Federico Storani and Raúl Alconada Sempé, March 1994, Buenos Aires.

UCR government actively supported the democratic opposition's efforts to present a united front against the military regime's ambitions to stay in power in the aftermath of the November 1984 presidential election.⁵⁰ In the midst of the campaign the *Blanco* presidential candidate publicly stated that 'he welcomed Alfonsín's comments about the political evolution in Uruguay because of his personal contribution to the Argentine neighbour's own redemocratisation efforts'.⁵¹

There is strong evidence that the Alfonsín administration foreign policy team perceived Uruguay, along with Brazil, as a special case for its international interactions. The two countries were referred to as 'democracies of the Southern Atlantic', with which it was imperative to establish special linkages to protect the fate of democracy in the Southern Cone.⁵² The development of an 'elective affinity' with democratising Uruguay could be observed in the meetings that Alfonsín and Caputo held with President-elect Sanguinetti in December 1984 and in February and March 1985 to discuss international issues, such as the external debt and the Central American conflict, which both sides believed greatly affected the prospects of building regional democracies.⁵³ Mutual concern about the consolidation of democracy also led Presidents Alfonsín and Sanguinetti to meet in the town of Colonia in May 1985 and issue a statement guaranteeing their support for regional democracy pledging to intensify international cooperation.⁵⁴

Foreign policy coordination was intensified in June 1985 at a meeting between Presidents Alfonsín, Sanguinetti, and Sarney in the Uruguayan beach resort of Punta del Este. The three presidents agreed that hemispheric political stability was linked to structural problems emerging from the international environment that needed to be addressed through increased foreign policy coordination and an informal type of 'democratic alliance' that would include political and economic cooperation.⁵⁵ Foreign

⁵⁰ Jorge Sabato confirmed that some negotiations took place with the Uruguayan democratic opposition to, in his own words, 'reinforce the strength of the democratic movement against any attempt to institutionalise a tutelary democracy in Uruguay'. Author's interview with Jorge Sabato, Oct. 1993, Buenos Aires.

⁵¹ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 21 Nov. 1984).

⁵² This perception of Uruguay and Brazil being 'natural allies because of the democratic nature of their governments has been specifically expressed in an interview Caputo gave to the journal *América Latina/Internacional*, vol. 6 (July–Sept., 1989), p. 267.

⁵³ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 18 Dec. 1984; 8 Feb., 3–4 March 1985).

⁵⁴ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 20 May 1985).

⁵⁵ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 23–24 June 1985). There have been reports that before the Punta del Este meeting the three presidents had decided to establish a telephone line for discussions and consultations about the adoption of coordinated initiatives in relation to difficulties the three nascent democracy encountered in the international system. See *La Razón* (Buenos Aires, 23 June 1985).

policy coordination between Argentina and Uruguay further intensified in the following months: Alfonsín and Caputo went to Uruguay in November 1985 and in February and June 1986 to discuss strategies of cooperation with the Sanguinetti administration in relation to the external debt, the Central American conflict, and trade protectionism.⁵⁶

During the first administration of President Sanguinetti, (1985–1990) Uruguayan foreign policy was articulated in a manner very similar to *alfonsinista* thinking about the impact of international factors and the consolidation of its democracy, as can be seen in Uruguay's preoccupation with the adoption of a political solution to the external debt problem, its eagerness to support the North-South agenda, and its concern about the implication of the Central American conflict for the security of Latin American democracies.⁵⁷ Foreign policy coordination also involved Uruguayan political support to Argentina on some international issues, for instance, on the *Malvinas*/Falklands issue that helped to diminish sabre rattling by the military. Uruguay also endorsed several Argentine resolutions at the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation of American States (OAS) that requested the United Kingdom initiate talks on the future of the archipelago.⁵⁸ At the same time, the Alfonsín and Sanguinetti administrations settled the long-standing territorial conflict about the Martín García island.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 16 Nov. 1985; 22 Feb., 16 June 1986).

⁵⁷ For references on Uruguayan foreign policy during the first Sanguinetti administration see Lincoln Bizzozero, 'La Política Exterior del Uruguay en una Perspectiva Histórica', *Síntesis*, no. 13 (Jan.–April 1991), pp. 347–57; M. E. Castillo, 'La Reinserción Internacional del Uruguay Democrático durante 1985', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Políticas exteriores latinoamericanas para sobrevivir* (Buenos Aires, 1986), pp. 458–79; 'Uruguay: Profundización del Camino Trazado en la Política Exterior Democrática', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de Políticas Exteriores Latinoamericanas: continuidad y cambio* (Buenos Aires, 1987), pp. 455–77; 'La Política Exterior del Uruguay 1987: Manteniendo la Continuidad Externa', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Las políticas exteriores de América Latina y el Caribe 1987, un balance de esperanzas* (Buenos Aires, 1988), pp. 327–43 and 'Uruguay: Política Exterior en 1988', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Las políticas exteriores de América Latina y el Caribe: a la espera de una nueva etapa* (Buenos Aires, 1989), pp. 286–300; Carlos Lújan, 'Redemocratización y Política Exterior en el Uruguay', *Síntesis*, no. 13 (Jan.–April 1991), pp. 359–80.

⁵⁸ The Sanguinetti administration voted in favour of resolutions about the resumption of negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom and supported the Argentine position on this issue during some OAS and UN meetings and in other international fora, such as the Non-Aligned Movement during its 1985 and 1986 Luanda and Harare summits. Moreover, Uruguay condemned the British government's November 1986 decision to impose a 150-mile security zone around the *Malvinas*/Falklands islands and supported an Argentine resolution at the UN to condemn the move. On this see *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 1–3 Nov. 1986); Castillo, 'La reinserción internacional', p. 468; Castillo, 'Uruguay: Profundización del Camino Trazado', p. 470.

⁵⁹ *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 15 June 1988).

The Uruguayan democratisation process also increased Uruguay's likelihood of entering any future Southern Cone regional economic integration scheme, providing institutional basis for such an admission through the creation of an Argentine-Uruguayan commission on economic cooperation and trade.⁶⁰

The integration dynamics gathered speed in May 1987 with the signature of the Montevideo Act between Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. Although mainly focusing on the terms of Uruguayan admission into the developing Argentine-Brazilian economic integration scheme, the act strongly emphasised a common will to fuse democratic consolidation with the economic and cultural integration of the three countries.⁶¹ The integration process was deepened by the ratification, in September 1987, of the Buenos Aires Act that covered economic cooperation in the fields of science, technology, and culture.⁶² The last significant stage on economic integration during the tenure of the Argentine and Uruguayan transitional administrations took place in November 1988 when Uruguay was officially integrated into what was subsequently to become the Mercosur.⁶³

Relations between Alfonsín's Argentina and Stroessner's Paraguay

The UCR administration's rejection of President Stroessner was mainly based on his authoritarian approach to politics. As an Argentine policy maker of the period indicated:

We were highly suspicious of Stroessner's intentions about our political project. He was far from friendly. It should be remembered that he had close connections with the military that had been responsible for the Dirty War and that these links did not evaporate after we took office. He had especially good links in the provinces of Chaco and Formosa with the oligarchic families that were the potentates of these regions and were opposed to democratisation as they had hugely profited from the *Proceso* years. Of course, we feared some kind of destabilisation process in these provinces and this had to be stopped. In our own eyes, getting rid of Stroessner, through pacific means, was part of the solution.⁶⁴

Argentine attempts to encourage a democratic transition in Paraguay took several forms, including protest at the violations of the human and

⁶⁰ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 20 May 1985).

⁶¹ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 27 May 1987). The full statement by Presidents Alfonsín and Sanguinetti and the full text of the Montevideo Act can be found in 'Acta de Montevideo', *Integración Latinoamericana*, vol. 12, no. 127 (Sept. 1987), pp. 57–60.

⁶² *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 16 Sept. 1987); Castillo, 'La Política Exterior del Uruguay', p. 332.

⁶³ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 30 Nov. 1988); Castillo, 'Uruguay: Política Exterior', p. 292.

⁶⁴ Author's joint interview with Raúl Alconada Sempé and Federico Storani, March 1994, Buenos Aires.

political rights of the democratic opposition.⁶⁵ The Argentine ambassador to Paraguay, Raúl Quijano, received instructions from Alfonsín himself to assist and protect members of the democratic opposition, including sheltering them in the embassy against repression from the Stroessner regime.⁶⁶

During 1988 Argentina pressured the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) to adopt a resolution condemning the Stroessner regime kept until then on the back burner.⁶⁷ Political asylum was granted to several leaders of the Paraguayan democratic opposition.⁶⁸ The UCR administration also organised clandestine operations to get some leaders of the democratic opposition out of the country.⁶⁹ In particular, Paraguay condemned the logistical support granted to one of Stroessner's main opponents, Liberal Radical leader Miguel Seguí, to flee to Argentina.⁷⁰

During an official visit to Spain in June 1984, President Alfonsín confirmed the Stroessner dictatorship's suspicions that his administration had developed active contacts with some segments of the opposition that had taken part into the creation of the Paraguayan National Accord.⁷¹ In response to a meeting of their proscribed organisation, which took place in Argentina with the explicit approval of the Alfonsín administration, in October 1984, Paraguay closed its borders with Argentina for a few days. The diplomatic deadlock led Buenos Aires to condemn the repression and imprisonment of some leaders of the MOPOCO, one of the signatory

⁶⁵ Leandro Despouy underlined that President Alfonsín refused to receive Paraguayan Ambassador Rivera Posada for more than a year to protest against human rights violations in his country. The first encounter between the two officials essentially involved discussion about the human rights situation in Paraguay. A few months later Alfonsín received the new Paraguayan Ambassador González Arias, to request that persecution of the political opposition be stopped. Author's interview with former director of the Human Rights Secretariat of the Argentine Foreign Affairs Ministry, Leandro Despouy, Oct. 1995, Buenos Aires.

⁶⁶ Author's interview with Raúl Alconada Sempé, Nov. 1993, Buenos Aires. The Argentine press during the year 1986 underlined that the Stroessner administration protested against Ambassador Quijano's friendly activities with the Paraguayan democratic opposition. On this see *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 6–8 May 1986).

⁶⁷ Author's interview with Leandro Despouy, Oct. 1995; Buenos Aires.

⁶⁸ Argentina under Alfonsín granted political asylum to people from all sides of the democratic spectrum, such as the leaders of the Socialist Party and of the Liberal Party, Juan Carlos Galaverna, the Seguí brothers, Domingo Laíno and Captain Napoleón Ortigoza, who was the longest-held political prisoner of Latin America. *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 12 Sept. 1986; 20 April 1987; 9 April, 4 May, 6 June 1988). Author's interview with Leandro Despouy, Oct. 1995, Buenos Aires.

⁶⁹ Author's interviews with Jorge Sabato and Leandro Despouy, Oct. 1993 and Oct. 1995, Buenos Aires.

⁷⁰ *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 9 April 1988).

⁷¹ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 18 June 1984). The Paraguayan National Accord was founded in 1979 to oppose the Stroessner regime and since then had constituted the backbone of the democratic opposition to the Stroessner dictatorship.

parties to the Paraguayan National Accord.⁷² A few months later, the Paraguayan government officially protested about ‘undue Argentine interference’ in its internal political process, whilst the Alfonsín government justified its aid to the opposition by the fact that ‘both countries did not share the same constitutional basis as a way to operationalise politics’.⁷³

Tension between the two countries reached new heights in January 1986 when a Venezuelan newspaper disclosed that the Stroessner regime had financially supported destabilising actions carried out by sectors of the Argentine military. Alfonsín cancelled a meeting with Stroessner, seriously considered the expulsion of the Paraguayan ambassador and breaking off diplomatic relations.⁷⁴ Relations between the two countries remained strained throughout 1987, as Paraguay refused to extradite some former Argentine military officers suspected of having illegally adopted children of people disappeared during the Dirty War.⁷⁵ Some Paraguayan diplomatic sources suggest that incidents at the borders almost brought the two countries to armed conflict.⁷⁶ The Stroessner regime stepped up its condemnation of Argentine interference in the Paraguayan political process and, in veiled terms, threatened a destabilisation of the latter’s redemocratisation process with the ‘assistance’ of friends living in Argentina.⁷⁷

From 1986, the Alfonsín administration repeatedly attempted to convince the Brazilian government that Stroessner had to be toppled, but it encountered problems in this since the Paraguayan dictator had always been a very dependable client to Brasília. Apparently, it took one year of intense lobbying to convince Brazil that a democratisation process had to be initiated in Paraguay.⁷⁸ In parallel, according to some sources,

⁷² *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 6, 8, 11, 16 Oct. 1984).

⁷³ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 28 June 1985).

⁷⁴ *Clarín, La Nación, Tiempo Argentino* (Buenos Aires, 6 Jan. 1986); Jorge Luis Simón, ‘Aislamiento, Política Internacional y Desconcertación: el Paraguay de Stroessner de Espalda a América Latina’, *Revista Paraguaya de Sociología*, vol. 25, no. 73 (1989), p. 225.

⁷⁵ *Clarín, La Razón* (Buenos Aires, 28 Aug., 3, 20 Nov. 1987). The UCR administration protested against Paraguayan refusal to extradite Argentine citizens guilty of the abduction of children of disappeared people by recalling Ambassador Quijano from August to November 1987. On this see *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 24 Aug., 21 Nov. 1987).

⁷⁶ Paraguayan Ambassador Miguel Angel Bestard cited in C. M. Lezcano, ‘Política Exterior, Percepciones de Seguridad y Amenaza en Paraguay’, in Rigoberto Johnson Cruz and Augusto Varas (eds.), *Percepciones de amenazas y política de defensa en América Latina* (Santiago, 1990), p. 225.

⁷⁷ *Clarín* (Buenos Aires, 4 Feb. 1988); Virginia Bouvier, ‘Paraguay: Aislamiento Internacional del Régimen Stroessner’, *Cono Sur*, vol. 8 (Jan.–Feb. 1989), p. 1.

⁷⁸ Author’s interview with Leandro Despouy, Oct. 1995, Buenos Aires; J. Morales Solá, *Asalto a la ilusión: historia secreta del poder en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires 1990), p. 195.

discussions about the removal of Stroessner in office had been undertaken by the UCR with the Reagan administration.⁷⁹ It has even been alleged by an official of the Alfonsín administration that it offered money to a sector of the Paraguayan military linked to General Andrés Rodríguez to stage a coup to overthrow Stroessner.⁸⁰

The Alfonsín administration's relief at the end of Stroessner's rule was expressed when Argentina became the first state to recognise the legitimacy of General Rodríguez's February 1989 coup.⁸¹ It could also be observed in a series of highly-publicised meetings held in Paraguay and in Argentina during the last months of the UCR administration's mandate. In an unprecedented move both Alfonsín and Caputo, in the initial months of the Rodríguez administration, went to Paraguay to encourage the new Paraguayan president to accelerate the project of democratic transition.⁸² Later, Rodríguez and Foreign Affairs Minister Argaña came to Argentina to receive political support from the Alfonsín administration.⁸³

The Alfonsín administration left office too early to see any significant improvement in relations take place between the two countries.⁸⁴ However, starting with the February 1989 coup, there was a perceptible convergence in political values with which to build their respective societies, and democratisation in Paraguay allowed estranged neighbours to begin an unprecedented process of cooperation in foreign policy.

The UCR administration and democratising Bolivia

In sharp contrast to the *Proceso* regime's assistance to the destruction of Bolivia's democracy through active complicity with the July 1980 coup of General García Meza, the UCR administration deliberately attempted

⁷⁹ Author's interviews with Raúl Alconada Sempé and Leandro Despouy, Nov. 1993, Oct. 1995, Buenos Aires.

⁸⁰ Confidential source during an interview with the author.

⁸¹ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 5 Feb. 1989). It is revealing that the Alfonsín administration transformed itself, in the immediate aftermath of General Rodríguez's coup, into an ally for Paraguay within international fora. In contrast to its hostile attitude during 1988, Argentina was very active in withdrawing a resolution condemning the human rights situation in Paraguay at the UNCHR and became an important sponsor for the country's readmission into the commission. Author's interview with Leandro Despouy, Oct. 1995, Buenos Aires.

⁸² Argentine encouragements were especially pressing in light of President Rodríguez and Foreign Affairs Argaña's close relations with former President Stroessner and the *Colorado* Party. Author's interviews with Dante Caputo and Leandro Despouy, Oct. 1993, Nov. 1995, Buenos Aires.

⁸³ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 18 Feb., 23 March, 27 April 1989).

⁸⁴ The only exception being the agreement between Argentina and Paraguay to dredge the Paraná river.

to strengthen democratisation efforts undertaken in that country after October 1982.⁸⁵ As a Bolivian observer shrewdly pointed out, the eagerness of Buenos Aires to assist Bolivia's new government could be partly explained by the fact that both countries had been victims of repeated cyclical swings between authoritarian and democratic forms of governance, which the Alfonsín and Siles Zuazo administrations simultaneously attempted to eradicate.⁸⁶

As soon as he took office, Alfonsín expressed unconditional support for his Bolivian counterpart.⁸⁷ He made explicit statements about the need to support the preservation of democracy in Bolivia; a move, it is reported, that had been partially requested by the Bolivian constitutional authorities themselves to boost their chances of survival.⁸⁸ Argentina rapidly cancelled former dictator García Meza's residence permit and subsequently expelled him.⁸⁹ A few months later, according to some sources, Argentina and Brazil started a dialogue on the ways they could cooperate to strengthen democracy in Bolivia.⁹⁰ In June 1984, an Argentine parliamentary delegation was sent to La Paz with the explicit mandate to express support for the restoration of democratic government undertaken by the administration led by Siles Zuazo.⁹¹ Alfonsín, for his part, strongly repudiated Siles Zuazo's kidnapping by military extremists in July 1984 which threatened to destabilise Bolivian democratic institutions.⁹²

Later, the Argentine and Bolivian presidents met in the Bolivian town of Tarija in September 1984, to express their commitment to the establishment of resilient democracies in both countries, declaring that similarities in institutional organisation contributed to their mutual security and therefore needed to be strengthened.⁹³ Argentine fears of a democratic breakdown in Bolivia became stronger with the intensification

⁸⁵ On the assistance from the Argentine military regime during the García Meza regime see R. Russell, 'Argentina y la Política Exterior del Régimen', p. 176.

⁸⁶ W. Morales, 'La Geopolítica de la Política Exterior de Bolivia', Documento de trabajo, PROSPEL, 1984, p. 26.

⁸⁷ M. Yopo, 'Bolivia: Democracia, Inestabilidad y Política Exterior', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de políticas exteriores latinoamericanas frente a la crisis* (Buenos Aires, 1985), pp. 184–185. ⁸⁸ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 23 Jan. 1984).

⁸⁹ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 7 Feb. 1984).

⁹⁰ For instance, Presidents Alfonsín and Sarney, during an ALADI meeting, gave support to President Siles Zuazo for Bolivia to enter the Cartagena Consensus. On this see *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 26 April 1984); S. Alegrett, 'Nuevas formas de concertación económica en América Latina', in Luciano Tomassini (ed.), *Nuevas formas de concertación regional en los años 1980* (Santiago, 1990), p. 311.

⁹¹ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 4 June 1984).

⁹² *Clarín* (Buenos Aires, 1 July 1984).

⁹³ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 21 Sept. 1984).

of military manoeuvres at the end of 1984 and start of 1985 to destabilise the Siles Zuazo administration. This further enticed the UCR administration to give a helping hand to both constitutional authorities in La Paz and the democratic opposition.⁹⁴ Former dictator General Hugo Banzer had won the first round in July 1985 with 28.6% of the votes and therefore was the favourite candidate to win the run-off that was to take place in the Bolivian Congress the following month. Banzer's return to power was highly disapproved of by the UCR administration since, despite his democratic garb, he threatened a backdoor reintroduction of authoritarianism in Bolivia. Therefore, Argentina actively attempted to influence the August 1985 run off vote by encouraging democratic forces to water down their differences and attempting to unify them into a common coalition to weaken Banzer's chances of being selected by Congress members.⁹⁵ Moreover, it seems that the Argentine assistance did not limit itself to matters of a moral or purely logistical nature.⁹⁶

I went to Bolivia with a letter under the specific request of President Alfonsín. This letter was directed at the various Bolivian democratic leaders: Paz Estenssoro, Siles Zuazo, Paz Zamora, urging them to overcome their differences since internal disputes within the democratic family would contribute to Banzer's project to reinstall an authoritarian regime under a democratic façade. I urged them to present a united front against Banzer and affirmed that Argentina was willing to help them. Of course our support was mainly of a moral type; but also we sent them propaganda material that could be distributed to the Bolivian people, and helped them financially. Alfonsín used me on this matter because it had to be done through political emissaries and not through official channels. It would have been too risky to use the state's channels since it was a blatant encroachment on Bolivia's internal politics. Considering the state of flux of our own democracy at the time, the impact of making public the Bolivian operation would have contributed to stir up a debate in Argentina that would have helped the people with whom Banzer had contacts within our borders: the military and right-wing Peronists. Of course, Caputo knew about that and approved the operation.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ See *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 30 Dec. 1984; 18 Jan. 1985); M. Yopo, 'Bolivia 1985: la Lucha para la Stabilización', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Annuario de políticas latinoamericanas para sobrevivir* (Buenos Aires, 1986), p. 142.

⁹⁵ On the situation in Bolivia before and after the second round of the 1985 presidential election see *Clarín, La Nación, The New York Times* (Buenos Aires and New York, 21 July, 3–6 Aug. 1985).

⁹⁶ For instance, the UCR administration provided logistical support to organise the first round of the 1985 Bolivian presidential election of July 1985. On this see *Clarín* (Buenos Aires, 28 March 1985).

⁹⁷ Author's interview with Federico Storani, March 1994, Buenos Aires. Alfonsín also went to La Paz along with Presidents Betancur and Sanguinetti of Colombia and Uruguay where, it is alleged, they submitted Banzer to serious arm-twisting to concede victory to the democratic opposition. On this see *Latin American Weekly Report* (London, 9 Aug. 1985).

The Argentine government continued to provide support to Bolivia's democratisation efforts after opposition leader Paz Estenssoro was elected as president in August 1985. At the political level, Argentina provided support to Bolivian territorial claims against Chile for access to the Pacific ocean, and voted in many multilateral fora, such as the UN and the OAS, in favour of resolutions presented by La Paz on this issue.⁹⁸ The Argentine support for Bolivian claims was matched by the Paz Estenssoro administration, Bolivia voting for various resolutions that Argentina presented at the UN and the OAS on the *Malvinas*/Falklands islands in 1985, 1986, and 1987.⁹⁹ In addition, the Paz Estenssoro administration publicly supported the Alfonsín government when it was confronted by military rebellions in April 1987 and in January and December 1988.¹⁰⁰

On the economic front, Alfonsín ordered the payment of Argentine arrears in its importation of gas from Bolivia, and directed the ministry of economic affairs to facilitate reimbursement of the debt contracted by the García Meza dictatorship with Argentina. Buenos Aires also granted a \$400 million credit line to Bolivia to buy food and manufactured goods.¹⁰¹ Alfonsín accepted President Siles Zuazo's plea for Argentina to buy Bolivian gas at almost twice the international market price in order to boost that country's capabilities to buy technology and to finance some social services for the poorest sections of its population.¹⁰²

In subsequent years, the price of Bolivia's gas exports would become a strong irritant in bilateral relationship as Argentina's own economic hardships made its attempts at democratic consolidation even more

⁹⁸ Argentina voted for a resolution on Bolivia's territorial claims during the Harare 1986 and Georgetown 1987 summits of the Non-Aligned Movement. See E. Camacho Omiste, 'Bolivia en 1986: la Política Exterior del Neoliberalismo', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de políticas exteriores de América Latina y del Caribe: continuidad en la crisis* (Buenos Aires, 1987), p. 198; M. Yopo, 'Bolivia 1987: una Política Exterior de la Sobrevivencia', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de políticas exteriores de América Latina y del Caribe* (Buenos Aires, 1988), p. 155.

⁹⁹ Camacho Omiste, 'Bolivia en 1986', pp. 198–199; Yopo, 'Bolivia 1987', p. 155.

¹⁰⁰ On Bolivian support to the maintenance of the Argentine democratic process see *Clarín*, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 18 April 1987; 18 Jan., 6–7 Dec. 1988); C. Zannier, 'Política Exterior de Bolivia en 1988: entre el Pragmatismo y la Subordinación', in Heraldo Muñoz (ed.), *Anuario de políticas latinoamericanas: a la espera de una nueva etapa* (Buenos Aires, 1989), p. 118.

¹⁰¹ *Clarín* (Buenos Aires, 23 June 1984). This line of credit was increased by US \$100 million in July 1985 a few days before the first round of the Bolivian presidential election in an attempt, it has been alleged by the Argentine press, to boost the chances of democratic candidates to retain the presidency. On this see *Tiempo Argentino* (Buenos Aires, 16 July 1985).

¹⁰² On this topic see *Tiempo Argentino* (Buenos Aires, Jan. 5 1985). Argentina lowered its gas price to US \$3.70 per M³ at a time when the international price was around US \$2.20 per M³.

precarious. The UCR administration repeatedly requested from Bolivia a revision of the gas agreement to relieve Argentina of some costs entailed by its importation of energy. In September 1987, after several months of discussion, a new comprehensive agreement was signed which reduced the price of gas importations for Argentina and rescheduled its reimbursement timetable. In exchange Bolivia saw its obligation to buy Argentine products with the proceeds of its gas sales substantially reduced.¹⁰³

Although the Argentine–Bolivian bilateral relationship was not completely harmonious when the UCR administration left office, it can be said that the noticeable rapprochement that had obtained was more than partly due to the simultaneous processes of democratisation.

The Alfonsín administration and Pinochet's Chile

General Pinochet seemed to be well entrenched in power when Alfonsín entered office, and Argentine democratisers were troubled by the Chilean dictatorship's stubborn refusal either to liberalise or democratise the country's political system, which represented a direct threat for the consolidation of Argentine democracy. Members of the UCR administration vividly remembered the domestic political context in which General Galtieri had launched the 1982 *Malvinas*/Falklands war against the United Kingdom. They feared that General Pinochet could be tempted to use his foreign policy as a strategy of *fuite en avant* to keep control over the political process if demands for democratisation became too strong.¹⁰⁴

Any upgrading of the 'hypothesis of conflict' within Chile's foreign policy could potentially generate in reaction a relegitimisation of the Argentine military's own National Security Doctrine, and of its methodology in dealing with state-society relations.¹⁰⁵ Hence, it became imperative to devise a series of initiatives with the dual function of deflecting this potential threat from the trans-Andean neighbour, while encouraging the dissemination of democratic values in Chile.

¹⁰³ The 1987 agreement granted favourable conditions to Bolivia to reimburse its debt through a ten-year period. This would be then followed by a fifteen-year period during which Bolivia would pay an 8% annual interest rate which was much lower than private foreign banks requested from the country at the time. In addition, the Argentine requirement that 60% of the money Bolivia earned through the gas arrangement served to buy Argentine products was lowered to 20%. On the negotiations between Argentina and Bolivia and on the 1987 agreement see *Clarín, La Nación, La Prensa* (Buenos Aires, 24 Feb., 4–5 March, 14 Nov. 1986; 7 Jan., 27 May, 31 July, 3–5 Sept. 1987); Yopo, 'Bolivia 1987', pp. 155–6.

¹⁰⁴ Author's interviews with Jorge Sabato and Raúl Alconada Sempé, Oct. 1993, Nov. 1993, Buenos Aires.

¹⁰⁵ Author's interview with Jorge Sabato, Oct. 1993, Buenos Aires.

The first facet of the UCR strategy aimed at easing bilateral relations to encourage Pinochet to launch a democratic transition. In this context, it was imperative to avoid any Argentine action that could provide the dictator with justification to reject a political thaw in Chile; the Alfonsín administration's eagerness to solve the Beagle channel territorial conflict became one of the key pieces of this strategy.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the search for a resolution to the territorial dispute with Chile can, to a significant extent, be explained by the concern to build a more conducive external environment for the Argentine democratisation process as well as reducing the risk of a military confrontation between the two countries.¹⁰⁷

The UCR foreign policy team hoped that the settlement of the Beagle dispute would build confidence and cooperation in the field of national defence as well as reducing the autonomy and popular support of the military institution.¹⁰⁸ According to some members of the team, the resolution of the Beagle channel dispute was considered so pivotal that its failure would have jeopardised almost every aspect of the consolidation strategy that the administration was attempting to articulate through its foreign policy.¹⁰⁹ Caputo himself suggested that the fate of democratic consolidation in Argentina was inextricably linked to the Beagle channel dispute:

The possibility of an armed conflict with Chile is one of the factors that threatens democratic consolidation in Argentina and has considerable influence on the

¹⁰⁶ It is revealing that *both* the Argentine and Chilean democratic opposition saw a connection between the settlement of the Beagle territorial dispute and the launching of a democratic transition in Chile. A few months before the Alfonsín administration's inauguration, the Argentine and Chilean democratic oppositions jointly met and requested their respective military governments to reopen negotiations on the Beagle channel. It is clear from the August 1983 joint statement that they linked this foreign policy initiative with the strengthening of eventual democratisation processes in their respective countries. See *Clarín, La Nación, La Prensa* (Buenos Aires, 16 May, 7 June, 23–24 Aug. 1983).

¹⁰⁷ Representative of this way of thinking is a statement made by the then Argentine Minister of the Interior, Antonio Troccoli, in the midst of the Beagle channel treaty negotiations. Troccoli stated that, 'the dispute must be settled as soon as possible since the stalemate only provides an excuse for the Argentine and Chilean military to rearm, to fuel tensions within both societies, and to endanger the evolution of the democratic experiment Argentina has undertaken since 1983. On Troccoli's statement see *Clarín* (Buenos Aires, 28 Sept. 1984).

¹⁰⁸ Author's interviews with José Paradiso, professor of sociology at the University of San Andrés and Rut Diamint, advisor at the Argentine Ministry of Defence, Oct. 1995, Buenos Aires. In Paradiso's mind, the Beagle channel initiative was partly undertaken to eventually force the military institution to accept civilian supremacy by reducing its autonomy and severing the link with nationalist elements within civil society.

¹⁰⁹ Francisco Díez, 'Criterios Rectores de la Política Exterior del Gobierno de la UCR', *América Latina/Internacional*, vol. 4 (April–June 1987), p. 111.

possible resurrection of democracy in our trans-Andean neighbour... One example of this lies in the need to reduce military expenditures to spend more on social and welfare services in Argentina. This depends, among other factors, on reaching an agreement with Chile about the dispute concerning our southern borders.¹¹⁰

During the 1983 electoral campaign, Alfonsín had indicated that it would be a priority of a UCR administration to solve the Beagle channel dispute.¹¹¹ This pledge became reality when, less than six weeks after his inauguration, Argentina signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation with Chile in which they agreed to negotiate over the dispute.¹¹² Those negotiations were arduous because of the staunch opposition among nationalist sectors in both countries. As well as the high level of distrust between Argentine and Chilean diplomats,¹¹³ To overcome this, the Alfonsín administration used other foreign policy initiatives to build a confidence-building dynamic. According to a senior UCR government official, Argentina was eager to see Chile invited to the founding meeting of the Cartagena Consensus group on foreign debt since it perceived a link between the latter's integration and negotiations on the Beagle channel. The next government in Buenos Aires hoped that closer collaboration about the external debt issue between Argentine and Chilean diplomats would help them to know and appreciate each other better, to establish a dialogue, and to eliminate mutual suspicions. Consequently, Argentina pressured, and eventually convinced, reluctant countries such as Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela to allow Chile to participate in the founding meeting of the group in June 1984.¹¹⁴

The ratification in May 1985 of a treaty settling the Beagle channel dispute helped to satisfy one critical objective of the Alfonsín

¹¹⁰ Interview with Caputo in *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires, 14 Dec. 1983).

¹¹¹ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 24 Aug., 26, 28 Oct. 1983).

¹¹² *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 24 Jan. 1984).

¹¹³ For instance, the Alfonsín administration encountered strong opposition to the proposed settlement with Chile from nationalist elements of the Peronist Party. Although the nationalist opposition was subsequently discredited during a televised debate, it remained a serious obstacle to the initiative since the opposition controlled the treaty ratification process through its majority in the Senate. The seriousness of the nationalist threat became obvious when the Senate ratified the treaty by only one vote. In addition to the nationalist opposition, some military elements resisted the UCR administration's initiative with Chile. Former President and Vice-President General Roberto Levingstone and Admiral Isaac Rojas criticised the treaty and attempted to organise the opposition against it. On the nationalist/Peronist opposition to the Beagle treaty before the November 1984 plebiscite see *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 12, 18 Sept.; 23, 27 Oct.; 1, 3, 5, 8, 16 Nov. 1984). On the military opposition to the Beagle treaty see *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 2, 24 Jan., 3 Sept., 5–6 Oct. 1984).

¹¹⁴ Author's interview with Jorge Sabato, Oct. 1993, Buenos Aires.

administration's strategy towards the Pinochet regime but this was maintained after the treaty ratification.¹¹⁵ The cautious handling of the discovery of an alleged Chilean spy network, coupled with the mild reaction to Pinochet's accusations of 'unjustified interferences' from the *Junta Coordinadora de la UCR* into Chile's internal affairs illustrate the desire to not antagonise the dictator.¹¹⁶ Nonetheless, although bilateral relations improved after the Beagle channel treaty, there never developed a fully amicable relationship between the Alfonsín administration and the Pinochet regime. This was clearly limited by the fact that they did not share the same political values and inclinations.¹¹⁷ Collaboration between Presidents Alfonsín and Pinochet never gained the intensity, let alone warmth, which developed between the Argentine president and other Latin American democratising leaders.¹¹⁸ Alfonsín declared that Argentine-Chilean relations, although being very 'cordial', could only be normalised *after* a democratic transition had taken place in Chile. In sharp contrast with increasing political and economic rapprochement with Brazil, Uruguay and Bolivia during his administration, President Alfonsín repeatedly rejected the possibility of deepening economic integration with Chile, despite the creation in 1985 of a binational economic commission, without prior democratisation in that country.¹¹⁹

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A second aspect of the campaign to convince Pinochet to democratise the Chilean political system involved encouragement of internal political conditions that would directly eliminate obstacles for the inauguration of a process of democratic transition in Chile. For the UCR foreign policy makers, Pinochet's refusal to engage in a political opening could

¹¹⁵ On the treaty ratification see *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 15 May 1985).

¹¹⁶ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 10, 12, 14 May, 1, 16 July 1986); *Southern Cone Report* (London, 23 May 1986).

¹¹⁷ G. M. Figari, *Argentina y América Latina: conflictos y cooperación* (Buenos Aires, 1991), p. 66.

¹¹⁸ One example of this can be found in the fact that Argentina seemed to show hostility to some aspects of Chile's foreign policy during the period under study. For instance, Argentina voted for the Bolivian request during the 1986 and 1987 Luanda and Georgetown Non Aligned Movement summits for a territorial concession from Chile to endow Bolivia with a sea outlet. See *El Mercurio* (Santiago, 10 Sept. 1986; 11 Nov. 1987); Camacho Omiste, 'Bolivia en 1986', p. 200.

¹¹⁹ See *Clarín La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 10 Jan. 1987); *El Mercurio* (Santiago, 25 Sept. 1987).

degenerate into an insurrectional situation through which the armed left, led by the *Movimiento Insurreccional Revolucionario* and the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez*, could eventually topple the dictator:

We were worried by what might happen in Chile. Pinochet was absolutely unwilling to negotiate and he had a perfect domestic environment for being so intransigent. The opposition was very divided and the repressive apparatus had almost disarticulated Chilean civil society, at least during the initial period of our administration... Although we became aware of this potential danger long before the Americans, we shared the Reagan administration's fears that Pinochet could be overwhelmed on his left; that an insurrection could take place and that it could succeed!... We were also afraid of the consequences of increased guerrilla activities in Chile. These movements could seek to use Argentina as a sanctuary with, as a consequence, all the possible ways of retaliation that Pinochet could use against our country if such a situation arose.¹²⁰

In this context, contacts were established with several sectors of Chilean society favourable to democratisation, and there are some indications that the Alfonsín administration undertook discussions with *blando* sectors of the military to see whether they could convince Pinochet to initiate a liberalisation process in Chile.¹²¹ Nevertheless, most Argentine efforts to unlock the Chilean political stalemate were geared to convincing the main democratic opposition sectors – notably the Christian Democratic Party – to engage in pact-making and initiate a dialogue with the Communists to present a unified front against Pinochet. A second line of action consisted of initiatives aimed at deactivating Chile's leftist guerrilla. During 1984 and 1985, the Argentine ambassador to Chile, José Álvarez de Toledo, received specific orders from Alfonsín himself to negotiate with the leaders of the Christian Democratic, Socialist, and Radical parties over how they might unify their position and engage in some kind of alliance to force Pinochet into accepting a dialogue.¹²² There is evidence

¹²⁰ Author's interview with Jorge Sabato, Oct. 1993, Buenos Aires.

¹²¹ It is alleged that communications were established in December 1985 between the Argentine administration and the military governor of the 12th region, General Luis Danús, because of his public tilt towards political liberalisation in Chile. According to *El Mercurio*, there had been some discussions between Argentine authorities and General Danús about the possibility of requesting a meeting with General Pinochet in which Danús would have appealed for a liberalisation of the Chilean political process. See *El Mercurio* (Santiago, 20 Dec. 1985).

¹²² Accounts of meetings in Argentina and Chile between Argentine officials and representatives of the Chilean democratic opposition existed during the whole length of the UCR administration's mandate. On this see *Clarín*, *La Nación*, *El Mercurio* (Buenos Aires and Santiago, 22 June, 11, 23 Aug., 18 Dec. 1983, 2–3 May, 26 Dec. 1984; 13 Nov. 1985; 8 July, 11–12 Sept., 10 Oct. 1986; 15 Feb., 10 Nov. 1987; March 1 1998).

that Argentine involvement had some influence in the creation of the National Accord of August 1985.¹²³

Alfonsín's instructions to Álvarez de Toledo also included orders to open a channel of communication with the Chilean Communist Party with the aim of moderating its intransigent stance over the method of removing Pinochet. This strategy was undertaken because the UCR administration firmly believed that no political solution could be negotiated in Chile if the Communist Party was excluded from the process, particularly because of its potential influence in convincing the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez* to withdraw its call for an armed insurrection against the Pinochet regime.¹²⁴ It has been alleged that in January 1986, a secret meeting was held in the Argentine embassy in Santiago between leaders of the National Accord and the Chilean Communist Party to explore ways for the latter to join this political agreement. The meeting allowed leaders of the democratic opposition to search with the Chilean Communist Party for ways of deactivating the guerrilla.¹²⁵ This meeting was followed by another, in 1987, when a secret emissary of President Alfonsín went to Chile to hold talks with leaders of the democratic opposition and the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez*. Discussions revolved around the way to reach a common strategy involving communist participation in the National Accord, and the ending of the armed struggle.¹²⁶

A UCR parliamentary delegation met with leaders of the Chilean democratic opposition in September 1986, on the eve of the thirteenth anniversary of the military coup, to express solidarity with the Chilean people and a prompt return to constitutional politics.¹²⁷ During the same

¹²³ Alconada Sempé underlined that as in Uruguay, there was a 'shuttle diplomacy' going on between the Argentine ambassador in Santiago and the democratic opposition to set up rules that would allow its unification to fight against authoritarianism in Chile'. In his opinion, the Argentine involvement facilitated the signature of the National Accord in 1985, although it was not the main element explaining its creation. Author's interview with Raúl Alconada Sempé, Nov. 1993, Buenos Aires.

¹²⁴ Author's interview with Dante Caputo, Nov. 1995, Buenos Aires.

¹²⁵ Interview with Raúl Alconada Sempé, Nov. 1993, Buenos Aires. The Argentine press alleged that early in 1986 a high-ranking emissary went to Chile to encourage a compromise between the Pinochet regime, the democratic opposition, as well as between the various sectors making up the democratic opposition. See *Clarín* (Buenos Aires, 4 Jan. 1986).

¹²⁶ Morales Sola, *Asalto a la ilusión*, p. 210. Federico Storani revealed that he was the secret emissary Alfonsín had sent to Chile to negotiate with the democratic opposition and the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez*. After his return, Storani suggested to President Alfonsín that Argentina should improve its relations with Chile to deny the Pinochet regime any excuse to disregard a democratic exit on the account that the nation was threatened by external elements. Interview with Federico Storani, March 1994, Buenos Aires.

¹²⁷ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 11 Sept. 1986).

week, Alfonsín and Caputo met in Buenos Aires with Christian Democrat Gabriel Valdés, one of the most prominent leaders of the Chilean opposition, to review the coalition's objectives.¹²⁸ Unfortunately for Argentine and Chilean democratisers, the political situation deteriorated when the General was nearly killed in an assassination attempt organised by the leftist guerrillas. The dictator hardened his stance against any kind of democratic exit, and the Alfonsín administration feared a resurgence in guerrilla activism, which could contribute to destabilise the Argentine democratisation experiment. Alfonsín and Caputo publicly stressed their deep concern that violent actions from the Chilean armed guerrilla could eventually 'spill over and seriously endanger Argentina's own security' and the government condemned the action by the *Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez*.¹²⁹ At the same time, though, it also condemned the imposition of a state of siege by the dictatorship. A resolution of the Argentine Congress giving 'support to the Chilean people in its search for an immediate and unlimited return to democracy' was adopted with President Alfonsín's explicit approval.¹³⁰

The UCR administration engaged in discussions with foreign powers on the means to advance democratisation in Chile. Some issues were raised with the González government during Alfonsín's October 1985 official visit to Spain and a dialogue was begun with the Soviet Union and Cuba, which were suspected of financing guerrilla activities in Chile.¹³¹ During Alfonsín's visit to the Soviet Union in October 1986 he sought to persuade President Gorbachev the need to stop financing the activities of the Leftist guerrilla in El Salvador and Chile to unlock the political stalemate in the two countries. Gorbachev is said to have replied that this request should be addressed to the real source of financing of the guerrilla's activities in Latin America: Cuba.¹³² Consequently, during a supposed technical stop-over in Havana, Alfonsín asked the Cuban leader to stop financing guerrilla activities in Chile since it endangered the country's chances of launching a redemocratisation process.¹³³ In addition,

¹²⁸ *Clarín La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 12 Sept. 1986).

¹²⁹ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 13 Sept. 1986).

¹³⁰ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 18 Sept. 1986).

¹³¹ Discussions between President Alfonsín and officials from the Spanish government about the Chilean political situation has been underlined by *Clarín* (Buenos Aires, 9 Oct. 1985). ¹³² *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 17 Oct. 1986).

¹³³ *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 21 Oct. 1986). The content of the discussion between Alfonsín and Castro has been later indirectly confirmed by Antonio Leal, the Secretary General of the Chilean *Partido Democrática de la Izquierda* (PDI) and then one of the leaders of the Chilean Communist Party. Leal equally mentioned that Alfonsín had established some contacts with the Italian Communist Party to obtain a request from Secretary General Enrique Berlinguer to his Chilean comrades to develop a more flexible attitude towards with the Pinochet regime. See *La Epoca* (Santiago, 10 June 1991).

Alfonsín stressed the dangerous impact that Cuban-financed activities in Chile had for Argentina's own efforts to redemocratisise. Alfonsín's visit to Cuba was vividly recalled by Raúl Alconada Sempé:

During his stay, Alfonsín discussed the issue of the leftist guerrilla in Latin America with Castro. He asked him to change his strategy in Chile and in Central America and to stop assisting leftist guerrilla if they would support electoral politics. We also explained to the Cuban leader that we believed that Cuba had a right to be itself, that the US embargo was reprehensible and that we agreed with the fact that his country should have political space in the hemisphere; but we stressed that leftist attacks should be eliminated. Otherwise Pinochet and the junta in El Salvador could never be mollified. Alfonsín equally said to Castro. 'I must be straightforward: whether or not it is in the Chilean guerrilla's project, its activity will negatively affect Argentina. To me it is intolerable that our democracy let water in from all sides.' Castro said that he understood and that he was going to do something about it.¹³⁴

Negotiations about Cuba's financing of the guerrilla went on for some time after Alfonsín's visit to Castro. It has been reported that in June 1987, Caputo invited Cuba's ambassador in Argentina, Santiago Díaz Paz, to a meeting in which they discussed ways to diminish the danger coming from the Chilean guerrillas, and to secure a democratic exit in Chile.¹³⁵ It is possible that Argentina offered some diplomatic trade-off to convince Cuba to cease financing guerrilla activities in the Southern Cone; according to one source President Alfonsín requested the United States to ensure that Cuba be able to reenter into the OAS.¹³⁶ If so, this could explain the rationale of the Alfonsín administration in voting against those US resolutions in 1987 and 1988 at the UNCHR in Geneva that condemned Cuba for its human rights violations:

Our commitment to the Cubans partially explains our attitude in Geneva with the 1987 and 1988 American resolutions presented to the UNCHR to condemn Cuba for its poor human rights record. We believed that Cuba had to be rewarded for the decisions it could potentially take concerning the *Frente Rodríguez* and the *Farabundo Martí*. Our move was also linked to the fact that we did not like the fact that the Americans were using this UN body for mere political objectives at

¹³⁴ Author's Interviews with Raúl Alconada Sempé, Nov. 1993 (Buenos Aires) President Alfonsín personally confirmed that he had discussions with Castro about the unfriendly attitude of the Argentine Communist Party towards his administration and democratic institutions in his country. On this see P. Giussani, *¿Por qué, Dr. Alfonsín?* (Buenos Aires, 1987), p. 151.

¹³⁵ Morales Sola, 'Asalto a la ilusión', p. 212. The meeting is mentioned in *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 29 Jan. 1988).

¹³⁶ This issue would have also been discussed between President Alfonsín and President-elect Bush. On this see *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 3–4 Dec. 1988).

Cuba's expense. We also believed that this tactic would hinder Cuba in undertaking a democratic path.¹³⁷

The Chilean issue was also a matter of discussion between Argentina and the United States. The flow of communication between the two countries about Chile had existed since the Alfonsín administration was inaugurated in 1983, but it became especially intense in 1985, when the Reagan administration started to believe that Pinochet could be toppled by a Communist insurrection.¹³⁸ Several meetings took place between Argentine officials and Secretary of State George Schultz to discuss the Chilean issue. Alconada Sempé recorded these meetings as having been difficult, mainly because of the Reagan administration's intransigence on the issue of the Chilean Communist Party being part of the negotiation process:

I had many discussions over the phone with my American counterparts on the situation in Central America, Chile, and Paraguay. We also had two formal meetings specifically about the Central American and Chilean situations with American officials: one in March 1985, coinciding with President Alfonsín's visit to Washington, and the other during the fall of 1986. The first was a complete failure. Schultz showed up, we took pictures and then he vanished. We then talked to some American officials. We had brought maps and magazines about Central America and Chile. The Americans told us that the documentation did not matter because they made politics in the region... The second meeting was more productive. Schultz stayed for the whole time and actively participated in the discussion. I think that he really tried to understand our point of view and indicate that he saw us as a potential interlocutor in the Central American conflict and with Pinochet. However, he was adamant in his refusal that Communists be integrated into the dialogue process in Chile... However, at the end of the meeting, we had the impression that he had somewhat changed his mind about this matter.¹³⁹

Bilateral cooperation on this topic also included a series of discussions between various officials of the Argentine administration and the Under-secretary of State for Interamerican Affairs, Elliot Abrams.¹⁴⁰ Discussions

¹³⁷ See on the Argentine vote against American resolutions at the UNCHR about the situation of human rights in Cuba. *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 18–19 March 1987; 3 Feb. 1988).

¹³⁸ Author's interviews with Raúl Alconada Sempé and Dante Caputo, March 1994, Nov. 1995, Buenos Aires.

¹³⁹ Author's interview with Raúl Alconada Sempé, March 1994, Buenos Aires. It seems likely that Alconada Sempé refers to a meeting which took place at the UN headquarters in New York on 27 September 1986 between Secretary of State Schultz and Argentine officials as recounted by *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 28 Sept. 1986).

¹⁴⁰ On meetings between Argentine officials and Elliot Abrams see *Clarín, La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 2–3 May 1986; 8–9 Jan. 1987; 19, 21 April, 16 June, 3–4 Nov. 1988).

at the highest executive level also took place between during Alfonsín's official visit to Washington in March 1985, when he demonstrated his determination that a democratic transition be initiated in Chile. He even suggested that his administration could eventually modify some initiatives within its foreign policy – most notably some aspects of Argentina's policy toward Sandinista Nicaragua that irritated the United States, in order to achieve collaboration on this objective. Alfonsín's willingness to compromise could be observed during his last official meeting with President Reagan in November 1986, demonstrating the importance of Chile to his foreign policy.¹⁴¹ Finally, the administration actively supported the 'No' campaign during the October 1988 plebiscite that led to the ending of authoritarianism in Chile.¹⁴² Alfonsín later received representatives of the *Concertación* coalition to discuss the ways to achieve a victory at the coming presidential election and a resilient democratisation in Chile.¹⁴³ After October 1988, the Argentine president made a gesture to boost Chilean democratic forces on the international stage by supporting Chile's admission as an observer to the Rio Group meeting that took place in Punta del Este three weeks after the plebiscite.¹⁴⁴

Conclusions

The Alfonsín administration's integration of the international dimension in its strategy of democratic consolidation manifested itself in several ways between 1983 and 1989. As far as Argentina's immediate regional environment was concerned, the transformation of the international dimension into a instrument to strengthen nascent democratic institutions gave birth to a fundamental reshaping of the country's relations with its Southern Cone and Andean neighbours. The *alfonsinista* vision represented a watershed development in the way interactions between domestic and foreign politics were envisioned in Latin America. In sharp contrast to foreign policy practices under the *Proceso* regime of 1976–1983 and of its more distant authoritarian predecessors, Alfonsín's strategy *vis-à-vis* Argentina's Southern Cone and Andean neighbours was based on a

¹⁴¹ *Clarín, La Nación, La Prensa* (Buenos Aires, 18 Nov. 1986; 9 Jan. 1987).

¹⁴² On the Alfonsín administration's support to the 'No' side in the Chilean 1988 plebiscite see *La Nación* (Buenos Aires, 16 June, 30 July, 2 Oct. 1988). According to Leandro Despouy, the Alfonsín administration provided some financial assistance to the 'No' side during the 1988 plebiscite in Chile. For instance, it paid for several buses of Chilean exiles in Argentina, who were overwhelmingly against the maintenance of Pinochet in power, to return to Chile and vote in the plebiscite. Author's interview with Leandro Despouy, Oct. 1995, Buenos Aires.

¹⁴³ *Clarín, La Nación, El Mercurio* (Buenos Aires and Santiago, 25 Oct. 1988).

¹⁴⁴ *Clarín, La Nación, Pagina 12* (Buenos Aires, 29 Oct., 7 Nov. 1988).

framework inspired by neo-Kantian liberal internationalist principles. Guided by this idealist compass, the Argentine democratising government sought, through various initiatives, to bring to the fore the defence and promotion of democratic values as a normative priority in the country's foreign policy. The change was substantive in scope and had a direct, though still largely unacknowledged, impact on the evolution of relations between Latin American states.

It could be argued that the *alfonsinista* foreign policy opened a window of opportunity in inter-American relations, heralding the metamorphosis of the Hobbesian environment that had for so long hindered cooperation and hampered progress in hemispheric relations. Partly because of the UCR government's daring initiatives, antagonistic and counter-productive ways of articulating bilateral and multilateral interactions were slowly discarded, giving way to policies predicated on mutual advantage and cooperation. Soon after its inauguration, the Alfonsín administration ended Argentina's isolation on the international and regional stages that had peaked with the *Malvinas*/Falklands War of 1982.

Immediately after its inauguration, the government engaged in constructive relations with like-minded neighbours. The implementation of the *alfonsinista* foreign policy programme was facilitated by changes taking place in Argentina's immediate external environment. In the months preceding or following the Alfonsín administration's inauguration, many countries adjoining Argentina underwent democratic transitions of their own, installing administrations determined to institutionalise democratic institutions in their respective countries. The March 1985 emergence of simultaneous transitional democratic governments in Uruguay and Brazil provided a critical mass of committed democratic institutions in the Southern Cone. It created, to use Emanuel Adler and Peter M. Haas' expression, a nascent epistemic community of democratic leaders, that shared similar preoccupations and goals and who consequently agreed to coordinate action on a series of international issues deemed important for domestic processes of democratic consolidation. The degree of consensus among these leaders, let alone their willingness to coordinate foreign policy, was unprecedented at the time in Latin American history.

The direct lineage between the UCR administration's strategy of espousing a policy of protecting and promoting democracy when dealing with Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay – a feature that incidentally could also be observed in Argentina's relations with other areas of the world during that period – has some important implications for the study of international relations and for the literature on democratisation. The analysis of Argentine state behaviour under the

Alfonsín administration supports the proposition that domestic regime change, as embodied by this specific case from an authoritarian to a democratic form of governance, impacts upon the manner in which foreign policy is articulated and implemented. The Argentine experience of 1983–1989 also suggests that the international dimension might be a more important variable than generally thought in domestic strategies aiming at consolidating nascent democratic institutions. It is also suggested here that the traditional literature on democratisation studies and international relations frameworks have complementary limitations which must be overcome in order to reach a satisfactory understanding of the elements that can lead to democratic consolidation. Hence, both students of democratisation processes and international relations should consider expanding their scope of investigation to develop a still largely uncharted level of analysis that would examine the impact of foreign influences on the performance of local democratising elites and governments in achieving political transformation.