



Democratization and Its Qualitative Impact on Argentine Foreign Policy

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**Democratization and Its
Qualitative Impact on Argentine
Foreign Policy***

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I. Introduction

The foreign policies put into practice by the Menem and Alfonsín administrations are the most recent chapter of a history that contains numerous examples of ruptures -and also of continuities- between successive governments belonging to one same regime, whether democratic or authoritarian. This history also shows that it is possible to identify important ruptures within one same government. The changes introduced in the Argentine foreign policy by the Galtieri administration during the Malvinas war is an obligatory reference in this sense. Alfonsín himself introduced significant changes in the management of the external debt issue, particularly after the removal of his first minister of Economy, Bernardo Grinspun. On its part, the Menem administration, after some initial ambiguities, has given an increasing importance and, finally, a clear priority to the Mercosur. Likewise, it is clear that one same government can be aggressive in one case (Videla vis-à-vis Chile and Bolivia) and cooperative in others (Videla vis-à-vis Brazil).

This variety of behaviors on the part of different Argentine governments shows the difficulties that exist to apprehend the influence of the type of regime over foreign policy. On the other hand, if we compare diachronically the Argentine case with those of other countries in Latin America that are also undergoing democratization processes, such as Brazil and Chile, it is apparent that they have not introduced so many changes in their foreign policy and, moreover, show important continuities.

This clearly contrasting situation seems to confirm the argument of those authors that have pointed out the existence of a contingent or very weak relation between type of regime and Argentine foreign policy.⁽¹⁾ These opinions, however, have two serious shortcomings. First, they do not consider that most "democracies" in the country's history (I do not say all "democracies" just to avoid a debate that would take us out of our main focus here) were quite far from possessing the indispensable attributes that main western political scientists have singled out as characteristic of democratic regimes. Moreover, previous "democracies", at least from 1958 till 1983, had four common features: a) they were short-lived; b) they were under strong military pressure; c) they

¹ See for example, Carlos Escudé, "Régimen político y política exterior: el caso argentino", Paper presented to the Grupo de Trabajo sobre Políticas Exteriores Comparadas, RIAL, San Lorenzo del Escorial, Spain, October 8-13, 1989, and Joseph S. Tulchin, "Authoritarian Regimes and Foreign Policy: The Case of Argentina", in Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph S. Tulchin (eds.), Latin American Nations in World Politics, Boulder: Westview Press, 1984.

proscribed or strongly limited the participation of Peronism, the main political force during the whole period; and d) they were interrupted by military coups and, consequently, followed in a pendular sequence by authoritarian governments. Second, they make a mistake in the formulation of the problem itself, that is to ask if the type of regime has a central role in the determination of foreign policy. ⁽²⁾ The recent experience of the democratization processes in the Southern Cone, as already noted, offered a clear answer: the impact of this variable is manifestly different in terms of foreign policy changes.

However, if the question is formulated in another manner, I think it is possible to establish some important correlations between type of regime and foreign policy behaviors. The correct question should be then: what difference does the type of regime make to the conduct of the foreign affairs of a given country? Put it in another way: on what aspects of foreign policy -if there is any- does the type of regime matter for?

The question has two important nuances. The first, of a more general character, leads us directly to the classic theoretical debate between liberals and realists on the relation between type of regime and external behavior of states. ⁽³⁾ The second, more limited in its scope, refers to the influence of the type of regime on some specific policies in a determinate context -for example, policies related to intraregional security matters or to subregional integration within the framework of democratization of the Southern Cone since the eighties.

Regarding the first aspect of the question, my contention is that the type of regime has a qualitative impact on foreign policy. ⁽⁴⁾ Political regimes favor a certain type of policies and discourage others. In other words, the behavior of governments is affected by the constraints and incentives provided by the regime and in this sense the regime should account for some similarities of behaviors and outcomes. From this perspective, the political regime can be considered as a “structural cause” in play: it does not determine public policies (as foreign policy, for example) in any direct, mechanical way but sets incentives

² Escudé, for example, sustains that the constellation of ruptures and continuities in Argentine foreign policy does not justify a hypothesis considering the type of regime as the main explanatory variable. I deeply agree with this argument (and also with his conclusions) though I disagree with the formulation of the problem. See his op.cit. p. 1.

³ On this debate see, among others, Michael Doyle, “Kant, Liberal Legacies and Foreign Affairs”, Philosophy and Public Affairs, Vol. 12, N° 3, Summer 1983.

⁴ Interestingly enough, this assumption is even accepted by the authors that hold that the relation between type of regime and behavior of states is weak or contingent. I will come back to this point further on.

and imposes constraints. Governments may accept the constraints or resist and oppose them, but they can not ignore them. ⁽⁵⁾ At the same time, the political process that takes place within the regime helps to constitute identities, interests, and expectations consistent with the general principles and values of that regime.

Thus, and if my hypothesis is plausible, the basic behaviors attributable to the type of regime should transcend the variety of governments and continue in time as long as the type of regime also persists, in spite of the variations in their specific foreign policy actions. In other words, some peculiar behaviors should recur even as governments vary. Thereby, certain behaviors of the so-called Process of National Reorganization (from now on the Proceso) and of the Radical and Peronist governments could be considered as peculiar of one particular regime. For example, I find it difficult to imagine an Argentine military government seriously defending human rights in Geneva or a democratic government helping the Bolivian military to carry out a coup or fighting a war against a Western power or its neighboring countries. In sum, and though it lacks detailed content, the type of regime provides an important component for explaining and also predicting certain patterns of state behavior.

As far as the influence of the type of regime on some specific policies in a determinate context is concerned, my contention is that many foreign policy decisions and changes have been strongly influenced by democratization in Argentina. Here, again, what we have to observe (and measure) is not the quantity of changes (as most authors frequently do when they approach this subject) but their quality. Therefore, the key word to tackle this problem is nature and not amount of changes. ⁽⁶⁾

It is necessary at this point to define three concepts which are key for the

⁵ On structures as "constraining forces", see Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, New York: Random House, 1979, Chapter 5. On incentives and constraints provided by different political regimes also see the classical arguments developed by Immanuel Kant in his "Perpetual Peace", in Carl J. Friedrich (ed.), The Philosophy of Kant, New York: Modern Library, 1949.

⁶ As the Salmores have pointed out, the amount of foreign policy changes (or continuities) is largely related to: a) the amount of change (or continuity) involved in the coming to power of a new government; and b) the amount of (perceived) successes and (perceived) failures/mistakes of the previous government. In their words: "The less the old and new governments have in common, the more likely there is to be change in policy". Barbara G. Salmore and Stephen A. Salmore, "Political Regimes and Foreign Policy" in Maurice A. East, Stephen A. Salmore and Charles F. Hermann (eds.), Why Nations Act. Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978, p. 110.

purposes of this article: political regime, regime orientation and government orientation. I understand as political regime the set of norms, institutions and practices that define and regulate the structure and functions of the government, the way the authorities are chosen and the manner in which they must proceed. I define regime orientation as the fundamental policies and the general principles and values on which a given regime is based and articulated and that impose prescriptions and limits to the government's action. Finally, by government orientation I understand the particular principles and values sustained by different governments within one same regime as well as the specific policies implemented by them whose historical expressions can be (and in fact are) in sharp contrast though always guided by the general principles and values of the regime and compatible with their maintenance.

In accordance with my definition of regime orientation the fundamental policies and general principles and values on which a democratic regime is based and articulated on are: the promotion of peace, the utilization of diplomacy to solve conflicts between states, the respect of the basic principles of international law, within and beyond frontiers, and the fulfillment of international commitments. On the contrary, authoritarian regimes are prone to see the world as a source of danger, to violate the international law and to resort to all kinds of means to attain political ends, including coercion, intimidation, threat, the use of force and war. This does not exclude the possibility of a democratic regime going to war or resorting to confrontational tactics. Neither does it exclude that authoritarian regimes will negotiate or honor their external commitments. I am simply trying to define ideal types of state behavior.

Within the constraints that each regime imposes on the behavior of the actors, the specific differences in the content of policies depend in good measure on the different government orientation. This orientation, in turn, depends on the particular beliefs and values of the government leaders which can differ a great deal, as in fact happens, but that are inscribed within the regime orientation. There is a close and feedback relationship between the political leaders' philosophical and instrumental beliefs and the regime orientation. In other words, each regime is sustained by a determinate type of general philosophical beliefs (assumptions and premises on the "essential" nature of political life, the fundamental character of one's political opponents, etc.) and instrumental beliefs (the beliefs about end-means in the context of political action), that are peculiar to it. ⁽⁷⁾ These beliefs, thus understood, do not exclude important

⁷ See, Alexander L. George, "The "Operational Code": A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision Making", International Studies Quarterly, Volume 13, Number 2, June 1969, p. 201.

differences between governments belonging to the same regime and, even more, within governments.

Regarding this subject I would like to submit to discussion two hypothesis: a) that the political leaders' belief systems have had an independent effect on many of the foreign policies adopted and implemented during the period under study (1976-1998); and b) that the beliefs of the principal actors (and of Argentine society in general) on foreign policy matters have been directly affected and largely modified by dramatic domestic and international events and developments, rather than by democratization itself. However, this process has contributed to strengthen and institutionalize a set of beliefs, both philosophical and instrumental, characteristic of democratic regimes orientation.

Before concluding this introduction, it is convenient to look at the concepts democratization and democracy more closely. Certainly, this matter is not free from problems. Democratization and democracy are polysemic notions. The idea of democratization brings to our minds a teleological image. In effect, this concept normally makes reference to a complex process that starts with "transition" and leads to an ideal type of "consolidation" or even to "democratic persistence".⁽⁸⁾ On its part, democratic consolidation, as O'Donnell has shown, is also a polysemic concept.⁽⁹⁾ Even more, authors like Linz and Stepan consider that consolidated democracies are not immune to breakdowns.⁽¹⁰⁾

To these theoretical puzzles, it is necessary to add a practical one: the determination, within the framework of the Argentine democratization process, of the stage in which the country should be situated. This latter difficulty notwithstanding; it seems to me that in principle we can agree with two points: a) that Argentina still pertains to the family of "incomplete democracies"; and b) that, in spite of point a), it already possesses the two critical attributes that characterize Dahl's polyarchies. To put it briefly: the possibility of participation and opposition.⁽¹¹⁾

⁸ See Richard Gunter, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros and Hans-Jurgen Puhle (eds.), *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995, p. 413.

⁹ See Guillermo O'Donnell, "Otra Institucionalización", in *Agora*, Number 5, Winter 1996, p. 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12-3.

¹¹ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971.

Certainly, these attributes were absent, although in different degrees, during previous contemporary democratic experiences. Argentina also has two other attributes that have been recently pointed out as essential for establishing the democratic credentials of any country undergoing a democratization process: a) a generalized expectation that the electoral process and the possibilities of participation and opposition will be respected in an indefinite future;⁽¹²⁾ and b) that elected authorities should neither be subject to vetos or severe restrictions, nor be excluded from certain spheres of political decision by not elected actors, particularly the military.⁽¹³⁾

At the same time, Argentina still lacks other attributes that are necessary to reach the category of "full" democracy, such as government accountability vis-a-vis the citizens, universalization of the "rule" of law, effective separation of powers and, more specifically, independent functioning of the judiciary.

In brief, we are dealing with an actor (the Argentine state) who has moved along the line of the democratization process from the initial stage of "transition" (1983) to a debatable point corresponding to the phase of "consolidation"; that still belongs (and will probably remain there for a long time) to the class of "incomplete democracies"; and that simultaneously possesses key attributes (the four above mentioned) typical of democratic regimes. In this context, it seems to me that we have enough elements to deal with the question if democratization has made (or not) a difference in foreign policy matters.

In the lines that follow, I give some examples with the purpose of showing the qualitative impact of democratization on some aspects of Argentine foreign policy. At the same time, I resort to other examples to show, on the contrary, that this same process has not had any influence on other (and many) specific foreign policy issues. Following this, I make some brief and very preliminary references to the impact of democratization on foreign policy-making. Finally, I introduce some comments about democratization, belief systems and foreign policy. In the last section I present some tentative conclusions.

¹² See Guillermo O'Donnell, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

¹³ See J. Samuel Valenzuela, "Democratic Consolidation in Post-Transitional Settings: Notion, Process, and Facilitating Conditions", in Scott Mainwaring, Guillermo O'Donnell and J. Samuel Valenzuela (eds.), Issues in Democratic Consolidation: The New South American Democracies in Comparative Perspective, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992, pp. 57-104.

II. Democratization and foreign policy

Argentine foreign policy towards Latin America and, specially, towards the Southern Cone countries offers many clear-cut examples to show how democratization impinges on foreign policy changes. Certainly, an important amount of changes produced since the beginning of this process stems from other variables, whose relative causal power is necessary to identify and determine case by case.

As we all remember, the policies applied by the military towards Latin America were oriented by an explosive combination of realpolitik, local geopolitics and anti-communism, which led to a systematic violation of the principles of non-intervention and free determination in the area. They also contributed to the spread of war and violence throughout the region. From the start of democratization, the Alfonsín and Menem governments put their policies towards Latin America under new guidelines: strengthen peace and mutual trust, defense and consolidate democracy and push for regional integration. These goals were concretely expressed in a vast series of initiatives and actions that implied sizable changes of foreign policy.

For the sake of being brief, I will only list the most important. During the Alfonsín's government the following measures are worth mentioning: the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Chile (November 1984), the process of rapprochement to Brazil initiated in 1985 and, particularly, the bilateral agreement allowing mutual inspection of nuclear facilities; the cosponsorship of the Brazilian proposal to create a zone of peace and cooperation in the South Atlantic, the gradual modification of traditional hypotheses of conflict with neighboring countries, and the role of first order in the formation of the Cartagena Consensus and the Contadora Support Group. The active participation of Radical diplomacy in this second group, particularly up until the Caraballeda meeting in January 1986, was one of the clearest ruptures with the foreign policy of the Proceso. The policy shifted from military aid to the Salvadoran army and anti-Sandinist insurgence within a vast, complex operation coordinated with the Reagan administration to clear opposition to actions undertaken by that very same Administration in the area and was based upon the rejection of all forms of foreign intervention, the strengthening of diplomatic channels, and regional coordination.

The Menem administration has not only maintained but also deepened this policy orientations and practices. Specially, it has firmly supported the subregional integration process within the framework of the Mercosur and adopted important measures in security matters. For example, it signed with its

Brazilian counterpart (November 1990) in Foz de Iguazú a new Joint Declaration on Common Nuclear Policy, which opened the way for the adoption of a set of key bilateral nuclear policies. Moreover, in October 1996, the Armies of the two countries put into practice for the first time joint military maneuvers in Argentine territory. This, under an umbrella characterized by the complete dissipation of the traditional hypothesis of conflict based on the so-called doctrine of "armed peace".⁽¹⁴⁾

Bilateral relations with Chile have experienced as well a series of qualitative changes that seem to definitely leave behind resentments and rivalries of the past. Both countries have resolved 23 of the 24 conflicts over limits they had pending. The one before last of these was over the Laguna del Desierto, an area of the Andean foothills of 532 sq. km. submitted to arbitration by a decision taken by presidents Menem and Aylwin in 1991. The initial verdict of the Arbitral Court (integrated by jurists from Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Colombia and Venezuela) was issued on the 21st. of October of 1994 and it conceded to Argentina the sovereignty over the totality of the zone in dispute. In January 1995, the Chilean Government presented appeals of revision and of interpretation over this verdict that were rejected by the same Court on the 13th of October.⁽¹⁵⁾ After the final resolution of the case which was favorable to Argentina, only the border dispute over the so called "Hielos Continentales" remains pending. In this case, both governments signed in 1991 a Treaty on limits which has received many objections over the tracing of the frontier line on the part of parliamentary members of both countries. This situation led the governments of Argentina and Chile have carried out contacts with opposition forces aimed at obtaining a new bilateral negotiated solution. At the same time, contacts between the military establishments and defense officials of Argentina and Chile have grown in frequency and density since the beginning of democratization in this last country. A very important step in this process of bilateral rapprochement was the signing in November 1995 of a joint memorandum of understanding on security affairs.

In the economic field, the two countries have also achieved remarkable advances. Chile has become an important market for Argentine exports. Argentina, in turn, became a significant destiny for Chilean direct investments.

¹⁴ This operation has taken place in the province of Corrientes and concluded with the presence of Presidents Menem and Cardoso.

¹⁵ Four out of the five judges of the Court voted in favor of the Argentine position in the case of the revision appeal, and only the Chilean representative voted in favor of Chile. The interpretation appeal, instead, was unanimously rejected.

With approximately 6.3 billion dollars attracted by the economic opening and the privatizations undertaken by the Menem Administration, Chile has become the main Latin American investor in Argentina. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Many of these investments went to sectors previously considered of "national security, such as electric power or mining sectors in frontier areas of the Andes mountain range, a situation that clearly shows that mutual trust has increased.

Both countries have also signed an accord (April 1995) for harmonizing Chilean and Argentine versions of regional history. School maps and educational texts of both nations, among other data, are historically inaccurate, mostly because of the unsettled border issues of the past. The accord calls on Chilean and Argentine educators, cultural experts and historians to jointly study the matter and make recommendations about what is taught in schools and disseminated as public information.

It is also useful to my ends in this paper to bring up that in occasion of the signature of the free trade agreement between the Mercosur and Chile (June 1996), the heads of state of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay made important advances concerning political cooperation. On one hand, they signed the so called "Malvinas Declaration" supporting the "legitimate Argentine rights" over the Malvinas Islands. This document is of no lesser importance. It was signed by all the countries without reservations -even by Chile despite its strong historical ties with Great Britain- making evident the interest of the countries of the subregion in adopting common stands. On the other hand, the governments of the countries of the Mercosur signed a declaration on political dialogue that establishes a mechanism of consultation and political concertation at the level of the ministers of Foreign Affairs or of high officials of the party States, to address domestic and international political issues. Finally, the presidents of the four countries of the Mercosur subscribed a statement on the "democratic commitment of Mercosur" in which they established that any interruption of the constitutional order in the countries that integrate this bloc or in the associate countries "constitutes an unacceptable obstacle for the continuation of the process of integration". ⁽¹⁷⁾ To be sure, the political crisis of Paraguay in April 1996 convinced the most reluctant on the need to count with a mechanism that would condition the continuity of regional

¹⁶ Around 60% of the Chilean investments abroad between 1990 and 1996 were made in Argentina. Electric power, oil, food products, supermarkets, shopping malls, printing houses, banks, paper mills, insurance and electrical equipment and cable factories, constitute the main businesses that have gone into the hands of Chilean capitals in the last six years.

¹⁷ The Presidents of Chile and Bolivia adhered to the "principles and dispositions of this declaration".

agreements to the full enforcement of democracy in the countries that are members or associates of the group.⁽¹⁸⁾

As it is known, the institutional crisis of Paraguay took place after the then commander of the Paraguayan Army, general Lino Oviedo, retreated to his barracks with his troops to resist his retirement from active service that had been decided by president Juan Carlos Wasmosy. During its development, the conflict of power between the president and the leader of the Army brought back memories of the blackest periods of recent Latin American history and created numerous uncertainties over the future of the still weak Paraguayan democracy.

The reaction of the governments of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay before this situation was immediate and energetic. They warned that they would not admit any rupture of democratic stability and that they would expel Paraguay from the Mercosur should the rebellion be successful.⁽¹⁹⁾ This position was clearly supported by the political parties of the opposition in the three countries, showing the high level of commitment with the process of democratization that existed in the subregion. One central aspect reunited all positions: the Paraguayan crisis was not (nor could it be) seen as a merely domestic problem given that it affected the credibility of the Mercosur and, in consequence, the external relations of all the member countries by endangering the agreements reached with other blocks or countries.⁽²⁰⁾

¹⁸ According to the opinion of the Argentine minister of Foreign Affairs, Guido Di Tella: "This clause is intended to avoid the repetition of situations like the ones experienced in Paraguay", La Prensa, June 26, 1996.

¹⁹ The attitude adopted by the governments of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay was a key factor in the resolution of the crisis in favor of democracy, though not the only one. The government of the United States, the OAS, the popular mobilization in defense of the institutions and the firm and responsible attitude of the opposition forces in Paraguay played an equally central role.

²⁰ It is worth mentioning that in the midst of the crisis, Manuel Marín, then responsible for the relations between the European Union and Latin America, maintained that the institutional situation of Paraguay constituted a "serious risk in the process of rapprochement" between the two economic blocs", Clarín, April 24, 1990. The framework agreement signed between the European Union and the Mercosur in December 1995, foresees its automatic suspension if any of the parties breaks the "democratic and human rights clause". A second -and less discussed- aspect, also contributed to unite positions: the economic and security reasons linked to the illegal activities carried out in the zone of the Triple Frontier with Ciudad del Este as its center. From there, illegal trading takes place which affects in an important manner the markets of Argentina and Brazil, but also activities of illegal arms sales, drug-trafficking and money laundering, besides being a terrorist base. A rupture of the democratic stability in Paraguay would only have facilitated the action of the groups linked to these activities and would have affected the credibility of the agreements of cooperation signed in April 1996 by Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay to fight jointly against terrorism and drug-trafficking.

Human rights and the Malvinas sovereignty dispute with Great Britain are two other salient aspects in which it is possible to observe the influence of democratization on policy. As for the first topic, the policies put into practice by the Radical and Peronist administrations, not only implied a turning point in the human rights policy at the domestic level, but also the transformation of Argentina into a high profile international actor in this subject, which has been defined and considered by both governments as an "extranational" affair. The same is true as far as the defense of democracy is concerned. Therefore, the years of the Proceso were left far behind, a time when the high military ranks acidly accused Western governments of using the issues of democracy and human rights to intervene in the country's domestic affairs. Regarding the Malvinas dispute, the Alfonsín and Menem administrations assumed the firm commitment to definitely place the controversy with Great Britain in the sphere of the diplomatic means. It is clear that the positive evolution of democratization in Argentina makes it highly improbable to carry out adventures of a military type with the purpose of recovering the islands.

In sum, democratization has had a qualitative influence on Argentine foreign policies vis-a-vis Latin America, human rights, defense of democracy and Malvinas. On the contrary, it has a minimal causal power to account for changes in the specific contents of policies vis-à-vis the US, the EU and its member state. Furthermore, in these cases the policy agenda shows more continuities than changes. For example in the whole gamut of economic and trade issues. On political issues with clear implications on relations with the US and Europe, continuities go across regimes while main changes have taken place within the own process of democratization. Indeed, Alfonsín maintained similar positions to those of the military regarding the NPT and the Tlatelolco Treaty. Even more, his Administration decided to develop the Condor II project. Therefore, the important changes introduced by the Menem administration in these security related matters and in diplomatic and strategic relations with the United States stem from its different government orientation and other domestic and external variables.

As far as the foreign-making policy is concerned, democratization has brought some changes, though no as deep as it is generally believed. During the Proceso, the power structure created by the military led to the "feudalization" of that process, to inter and intraforce fierce struggles and to the development of parallel diplomacies. ⁽²¹⁾ This process, in spite of its centralization, had an

²¹ On this subject, see Roberto Russell, "El proceso de toma de decisiones en la política exterior argentina (1976-1989)" in Roberto Russell (ed.) Política Exterior y Toma de Decisiones en América Latina, Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1990, pp. 13-59.

extremely fragmented character. With democratization, foreign policy-making has reached a higher degree of unity and coordination, although it kept a relatively centralized character.

The Foreign Ministry's role during the years of the Proceso was secondary and at times, merely marginal. At the beginning of democratization, there was an initial situation of great distrust between the political officials and the "house". After approximately one year, some diplomats achieved a greater presence in the decision making process but no power. In general, this last situation still remains. Within this context, the foreign policy-making process is dominated by the Presidency and by the actors that occupy the highest political positions in the Ministries of Foreign Relations and Economy and, to a lesser degree, Defense, which has recently lost almost all weight. It is interesting to note that the greater salience of economic and trade issues in the foreign policy agenda is making the Economic Ministry and, specially, the economic focus of the Foreign Ministry increasingly relevant. The latter has changed its name to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship, upon absorption of the Department of Foreign Trade, previously under the aegis of the Ministry of Economy.

This dominantly presidentialist and Executive power structure, among other factors, has limited the participation of Congress in the foreign policy-making, although there is a progressive increase of its role -in an organic manner or through the individual or group participation of some of its members-. Simultaneously, the Congress has played an active role when it is called upon to ratify treaties or other Executive decisions. For example, the Congress forced the Executive to introduce successive changes to its original patent bill. Instead, its fiscal role has been insignificant, in spite of some high toned speeches and various interpellation requests for the Foreign Minister, in such matters as the handling of the external debt or the progress of the negotiations with the British government over Malvinas.

The influence of non state actors on the decision-making process has also been quite marginal. However, as democratization is deepened, the participation of political parties, business sectors, academic circles, the media and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in general tends to increase. This participation and influence varies case by case and depends fundamentally on the nature of the issue in question. The media, for example, has played an important role in shaping the view of political elites as well as the general public. Moreover, it has been both a source of critical information based on investigative journalism and a vehicle through which the government informs

the public of its foreign policies in issues such as Malvinas and Hielos Continentales. On its part, the degree of influence of NGOs over foreign policy-making has depended on their focus as well as on their level of organization and transnationalization. Generally speaking, the NGOs with the greatest influence over foreign policy-making have been those concerned with human rights and environmental issues. Finally, routinized efforts and informal mechanisms to consult business sectors have been put into practice when negotiating economic agreements or specific issues at bilateral, subregional, regional and multilateral levels.

As a result of this situation, foreign policy makers have shown themselves to be more sensitive than their military counterparts to the interests, pressure and influence of non-state actors. In spite of the above, foreign policy continues to be mostly handled in an “inner circle” within the Executive.

III. Belief systems and foreign policy

In this section I will briefly refer, within the framework of democratization, to two related subjects: the impact of leaders’ belief systems on specific foreign policy decisions; and the ways in which changes in belief systems have been institutionalized.

The profuse literature on belief systems has shown that they operate as a diagnostic and prescriptive framework whose importance increases as certain conditions take place.⁽²²⁾ For example, when political leaders -as in Argentina’s case- are relatively free from bureaucratic constraints or where there are novel situations requiring more than just the application of existing standard procedures. Under this type of circumstances, as Holsti has noted, an individual’s “cognitive map” may heavily influence his diagnosis of the situation, his search and analysis of different actions alternatives, and his subsequent prescriptions and choices that led to a foreign policy decision.⁽²³⁾

There is a relation of a hierarchical character between the leaders’ “operational code” and their contextual beliefs (what is held as true, likely or

²² See Alexander L. George, “The “Operational Code”: A Neglected Approach to the Study of Political Leaders and Decision-Making”, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-7.

²³ Cited by Stephen G. Walker, “The Interface Between Beliefs and Behavior: Henry Kissinger’s operational code and the Vietnam War”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 27, 1983, p. 130.

probable in a specific circumstance). The first acts as a lens form which a part or "reality" is read. Thus, philosophical and instrumental beliefs allow some things to be seen and veil others. Based on these, and in a fragmented manner, a diagnosis is made of a determinate issue, alternatives are favored or discarded and actions are prescribed which can turn into foreign policy decisions.

In this way, for example, the leaders of the Proceso, based on realpolitik and anti-communism (operational code), concluded that a global war was taking place between two antagonistic civilizations (contextual belief), in which Argentina had to play an important role on the side of the West using any means to face an enemy that had no qualms in reaching its political objectives (policy prescription). In the context of the second half of the seventies, they perceived Latin America as being seriously threatened by International Marxism and the United States under the Carter Administration as incapable of stopping the advance of the Soviet Union and Cuba in the region. Based on this diagnosis, they made numerous foreign policy decisions (for example, development of joint actions with other dictatorships of the subregion to combat the political opponents considered dangerous, intervention in the coup d'état in Bolivia in July 1980, participation in the war in Central America, etc.).

During the Alfonsín Administration, the "operational code" of the Radical Leaders (mainly of the President and his Foreign Minister, Dante Caputo) and their contextual beliefs on the nature of the East/West confrontation and the North/South relations are central to explain numerous foreign policy decisions and behaviors (i.e. the high profile in Central America and in the Non Aligned Movement, the rupture of relations with South Africa, the excessive emphasis on a diplomacy of prestige, the maintenance and development of sensitive technology programs, the participation in the Group of the Six, the first "methodological differences" with the Reagan Administration concerning the external debt issue and the Central American crisis).⁽²⁴⁾

The same is true for explaining some important decisions taken by Menem's government. For example, the withdrawal from the Non Aligned Movement, the participation in the Gulf War, the development of "relaciones carnales" with the US, the ratification of the Tlatelolco treaty, the adhesion to the NPT, the active

²⁴ For an analysis of these policies, see Roberto Russell, "Las relaciones Argentina-Estados Unidos: del "alineamiento heterodoxo" a la "recomposición madura" in Mónica Hirst (ed.), Continuidad y cambio en las relaciones América Latina-Estados Unidos, Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1987. See also Roberto Russell, "Sistemas de creencias y política exterior argentina: 1976-1989", Serie de Documentos e Informes de Investigación, Programa Buenos Aires, FLACSO/Argentina, julio de 1996.

intervention in defense of democracy in Haiti, and the elimination of most military technology programs, particularly, the cancellation of the Cóndor II project. All these policies, mostly oriented to develop a full alliance with the US and by extension with the West as a whole, are largely based on the contextual belief, widely accepted by the Menem's government (and by vast sectors of civil society) that the successful insertion of Argentina in the world at the end of the XIXth. and beginning of the XXth. century was the result of a preferential relation with Great Britain and by following a model of foreign policy that adapted itself, conforming to the circumstances of that epoch, to what we would call today a "trading State". The conclusion to be drawn from the latter is that the country must develop in a pragmatic manner new preferential relations to secure for itself a successful reinsertion in the world of the XXIst. Century.

I do not intend here to make an inventory of all the cases in which there is an important relation between beliefs and concrete policies. I simply mention those issues that clearly question the assertion that anybody placed in the leader's position would have behaved the way he or she did, those in which the "national interest" was explicitly defined by the leaders, and those in which it is impossible to explain the policies adopted without resorting to the leaders' operational code and contextual beliefs. It is impossible, for example, to disconnect the training of the Contras from the extreme anti-communism of some leaders of the Argentine Army, the rupture of relations with South Africa from Alfonsín's Krausism or the withdrawal from the Non Aligned Movement and the cancellation of the Cóndor II project from the liberal "operational code" of the Menem administration, both in economic and security international matters.

Certainly, a full explanation of these policies requires the utilization of the other variables, including those of psychological nature, such as leaders' motivations.⁽²⁵⁾ In all the decisions analyzed it is clear that beliefs as well as motivations had affected the leaders' interpretations of their environment and the strategies they used. There are numerous examples that prove this relation. For instance, the rupture of relations with South Africa was a clear expression of Alfonsín's idealism but also it was the result of the necessity to count with the support of the Black African countries in the Malvinas question. The decision to participate in the Gulf War was a consequence of the liberal conceptions of Menem's government -and more specifically of its perceptions about the international role of the US and of collective security mechanisms in the post-Cold War era- but also (I would say mainly) of the then perceived need to show

²⁵ See Stephen G. Walker, "The motivational foundations of political belief systems: a re-analysis of the operational code construct", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27, 1983.

that Argentina -finally- was committed to become a trustworthy ally of US. The latter, in turn, was considered a necessary condition of a new foreign policy strategy aimed at developing a “preferential relation” with Washington. Similarly, liberal beliefs have influenced the participation of the Argentine armed forces in UN peace-keeping operations, although important economic considerations and the pressing need to find a new role for the military were determinant factors as well.

My second purpose in this section is twofold: to identify the factors that led to a change of belief systems, both at the level of political elites and the society in general; and to briefly explain the ways in which new belief systems have been institutionalized.

This task is not free from problems. The experience with democratization is still short and, at the same time, existing empirical evidence does not allow to conclude that observable changes in belief systems are strong enough to displace long-standing beliefs. In other words, that we are experiencing some kind of lineal process of historical irreversibility where a democratic belief system will finally prevail. However, the particular combinations of variables that originated these changes and the evolution of the democratization process itself leave enough room for optimism.

Regarding the first set of factors, it is important to consider a series of dramatic events and developments of domestic and international nature. On the domestic side, main developments came one after the other: human rights violations during the 1970s, the Malvinas war in 1982, the “carapintada” uprisings that took place during the second half of the 1980s, and concluded in December 1990, and finally the successive crisis of hyperinflation of the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.⁽²⁶⁾ On the international side, three factors largely excel: the end of the Cold War, the extension and deepening of globalization, and, within this same process, the hastening of regionalization.

Together, this compound of domestic and international dramatic developments produced a generalized change of the political environment and brought important incentives for the emergence of new beliefs and the redefinition of old beliefs. On its part, the problems underwent, or made apparent, by the process of democratization, have also contributed to the strengthening and diffusion of new beliefs and, consequently, of new perceptions

²⁶ For a brief analysis of these developments and their effects on foreign policy, see Roberto Russell, “Los ejes estructurantes de la política exterior argentina”, in América Latina/International, Vol. 1, N° 2 (Fall-Winter 1994).

and practices. ⁽²⁷⁾ In this sense, and paraphrasing Adler, it can be said that new beliefs emerged and developed in a political system with problems. ⁽²⁸⁾ Critical features of Argentina's political system, such as political corruption or strong dependence of part of the judiciary on the Executive branch, proved that certain types of practices and institutions are not only condemnable on moral grounds but also on expediency reasons: they became, to put it simply, dysfunctional to the new environment.

In sum, dramatic events and developments and critical problems of democratization incentivated and shaped a process of gradual change from one belief system to another. This cognitive process has been one of the ways of institutionalizing new belief systems through the internalization, on the part of the political elites and the society in general, of new identities, interests and expectations. ⁽²⁹⁾ The other way has been by means of a behavioral process: the incorporation of these new identities, interests and expectations in social habits and international regimes.

Both processes worked in all areas of foreign policy. For example, and concerning bilateral relations with Brazil, expectations of democratic consolidation coupled with a strong rejection of domestic and international violence rooted in the memory of recent past suffering, helped to create an interest in confidence building measures and arms control regimes that rendered possible the development of social habits that enhance the prospects of peace and subregional integration. Through these practices both states established new security norms and rules that at present guide their foreign policies. More specifically, new identities and interests made possible the passage from one social structure (security dilemma) to another (a reasonably stable security community), that is one composed of shared understandings and expectations in

²⁷ Though, as noted, the available empirical evidence is not conclusive, the presence of these new belief systems can be established through a variety of sources. See, for example, the recent opinion poll led and published by the Argentine Council on International Relations (CARI), La Opinión Pública Argentina sobre Política Exterior y Defensa, Buenos Aires: CARI, 1998.

²⁸ See Emanuel Adler, "Cognitive Evolution: A Dynamic Approach for the Study of International Relations and Their Progress", in Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford (eds.), Progress in Postwar International Relations, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, p. 61.

²⁹ For a detailed analysis of institutionalization as a process of internalizing new identities and interests, see Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics", in International Organization, Vol. 46, N° 2, (Spring 1992).

which both countries trust one another and define their interest in cooperative terms. ⁽³⁰⁾

Certainly, the reproduction of this new pattern of international interaction followed by the Argentine and Brazilian states largely depends on the practices of domestic actors in the two countries. As Koslowski and Kratochwill have pointed out, fundamental changes in foreign policy “occur when beliefs and identities of domestic actors are altered thereby also altering the rules and norms that are constitutive of their political practices”. ⁽³¹⁾

Precisely, this is the type of processes that have been taking place within and between Argentina and Brazil. However, it would be unwise to conclude that the new patterns of state interaction that emerged in the last decade will follow an irreversible or lineal trajectory. By now, after having traced and explained their origin and evolution, what we can seriously say is that it is unlikely that Argentina and the rest of the Southern Cone countries will backslide in traditional practices of realpolitik (i.e. balancing, self-help, relative gains seeking, employment of military force as an instrument of statecraft, etc.). ⁽³²⁾

IV. Conclusions

In relation to the debate between idealists and realists, the Argentina's case reveals that there is no mechanical or lineal relation between type of regime and foreign policy, but also that this relation is not contingent. My conclusion is that this relation is qualitatively important, given that it is possible to affirm that there exist behaviors that are inherent to each regime. In effect, each regime has specific patterns of recruitment, socialization and functioning. In this way, a change of regime changes the actors that can gain access to the government, the operational codes and the set of norms, institutions and practices that define and regulate the structure and functions of the government and impose prescriptions

³⁰ On social structures including shared knowledge, material resources and practices, see Alexander Wendt, “Constructing International Politics”, in International Security, Vol. 20, N° 1, (Summer 1995).

³¹ Koslowski, Rey and Kratochwill, Friedrich, “Understanding change in international politics: the Soviet empire's demise and international system”, in International Organization, Vol.48, N° 2, Spring 1994, p. 216.

³² For a similar conclusion, see Andrew Hurrell, “Security in Latin America”, in International Affairs, Vol. 74, N° 3, July 1998, pp. 531-533.

to its action. Therefore, once the change has been made it is expected that the governments will adjust their external behaviors to the new orientation of the regime.

Indeed, the Argentine military regime is a sample book almost unequalled in Latin America of external behaviors that respond to the ideal type of foreign policy of an authoritarian regime: it made a war, was on the verge of launching another, intervened in another country's military coup, it did not comply with its commitments, it systematically violated human rights, trained troops to oust foreign governments, distrusted international organizations and saw the external world as a threat. These behaviours are peculiar to an authoritarian regime and respond to what could be called regime propensity.⁽³³⁾ The nature of the regime not only encourages certain behaviors based on the values and principles that sustain it. The set of norms, institutions and practices that define and regulate the structure and functions of the governments within a certain type of political regime also make possible or difficult certain behaviors. Thus, the intervention in Bolivia's coup d'état or the military participation in the conflicts of Central America were carried out with complete ease because an

³³ It is interesting to note that almost all authors who have studied contemporary Argentine foreign policy assume the existence of this "regime propensity", thus accepting the qualitative impact of political regimes on state behavior. I give just four examples to prove my argument. Joseph Tulchin holds that: "The absence of a normal political activity and of channels to express dissent had created for the military regime a sensation of independence that led the Junta to set free their grandiose geopolitical designs without the inhibition that any democratic regime would have confronted: to listen to the dissident voices". And further on he adds that "the error of judgement concerning the British response (in Malvinas) was produced by the nature of the regime and the characteristic of its advisors". See his book La Argentina y los Estados Unidos. Historia de una desconfianza, Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1990, pp. 269 and 274. Julio César Carasales concludes that: "The presence of civilian governments in Argentina and Brazil explain why it has been easier than in other circumstances the adoption of successive steps which led to a common nuclear policy". See his article "Los ejemplares acuerdos Argentina-Brasil sobre transparencia y cooperación nuclear", in Geopolítica, Number 53, XX, 1994, p. 36. Mónica Hirst sustains that: "In the last ten years, changes in security concepts and practices within and between states in the Southern Cone have been strongly influenced by the wave of democratization experienced in the area". Further on she adds: "Democratization has enhanced the use of peaceful settlement mechanisms strengthening the basis of this region "culture" of legalism". See her working paper "Security Policies, Democratization and Regional Integration in the Southern Cone", FLACS-DII/184, August 1995, pp. 3 and 31. Finally, Phillippe Schmitter concludes: "All we can say with certainty is that the demise of despotic government (within the subregion) has produced a significant decline in the likelihood of recourse to interstate violence and an unprecedented increase in the volume of interstate agreement". See his article, "Change in Regime Type and Progress in International Relations", in Emanuel Adler and Beverly Crawford (eds.), op.cit., p. 118.

authoritarian regime can keep such operations covert and/or because it does not have to account for them. Conversely, it is my contention that any other democratic government than Alfonsín's would have most probably supported the negotiated solutions in Central America. In the case of the Beagle, any other democratic government would also most probably have resorted to diplomatic negotiations to resolve the Beagle dispute. I recall in this respect that after the change of regime all the most important political parties signed an Acta de Coincidencias accepting the papal mediation as a "framework of peace". Of course, any government other than Alfonsín's could have adopted a much higher or lower profile in the Central American crisis or delayed much longer the solution of the Beagle dispute. But in essence, the behavior vis-à-vis both these issues would have probably followed similar guidelines due to the "pressure" of the regime. The policies adopted by Menem's government in security matters and in relation to the problems of limits pending with Chile are a clear sample of behaviors that are inscribed in the framework of the orientation of democratic regime.

Without doubt, there can be more moderate dictatorships, not so close to the ideal type. There can be more hostile democracies, not so open to the world and somewhat distrustful. Likewise, it is worth remembering that the Argentine military dictatorship produced a turning point in the relations with Brazil. Nevertheless, it should be known that general principles and values that characterize the orientation of authoritarian regimes influenced this decision and imposed important limits to the governments actions. Among them were the need not to have two open fronts at the same time, one with Chile over the Beagle Canal issue and another with Brazil on the subject of dams; the fear of the "traditional friendship" of the Brasilia-Santiago axis, highlighted ad nauseam by Argentine geopolitical literature; and the recognition of the disparities in the power attributes between Argentina and Brazil.⁽³⁴⁾

As to the second nuance mentioned concerning the relation between type of regime and foreign policy in a specific context, three aspects must be pointed out. First, that democratization was a key factor to eliminate the competitive sign of the interstate relations and to unblock old resentments and distrusts among the countries of the subregion. The clearest example in this sense were the steps taken by the governments of Argentina and Brazil in nuclear matters to "wash" each country's situation and to put an end to the mutual

³⁴ On the reasons behind this rapprochement, see my article, "Argentina y la política exterior del régimen autoritario (1976-1983): una evaluación preliminar," in Rubén Perina and Roberto Russell (eds.), Argentina en el mundo (1973-1987), Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1988, pp. 118-119.

apprehensions on the other's real intentions -without doubt, founded on good reasons during the years of military dictatorships-. Second, that redemocratization was central to the interstate cooperation and integration between Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay during the eighties. Likewise, it made possible the concertation in a number of aspects of the foreign policies of the three countries. At the same time, the continuation of the dictatorships in Chile and Paraguay left these two countries out of these initiatives. And third, that Chile's and Paraguay's return to democracy, on its part, played a determinant role in strengthening interstate and transnational relations in the Southern Cone. ⁽³⁵⁾ More specifically, the agreements subscribed by the Mercosur with Chile and Bolivia would not have been possible without democratization. At the same time, these agreements generate new conditions that contribute to enhance democracy, as was the case of Paraguay, and strengthen each country's position within the international context and, in particular, in the negotiations with third countries and other regional blocks.

In sum, it can be concluded that democratization has been a necessary condition, although not sufficient, for the remarkable advances produced in terms of subregional integration. An explanation in full of this process requires taking into consideration other variables that have just as much -or even more- influence than democratization on the development of this process that has placed the relations among the Southern Cone countries under an umbrella of cooperation and growing mutual trust. For example, the influence of factors of an economic nature, particularly the globalization of capitalism, the difficulties to gain access to the NAFTA (in the cases of Argentina and Chile) and the necessities that arise from the new strategies of development implemented by the countries of the Southern Cone. As an author points out: "Economic factors have become the most important source for the identification of common interests in this area". ⁽³⁶⁾

³⁵ This aspect has been also recognized by distinguished Chilean analysts. See, for example, Carlos Portales Cifuentes, "La política exterior chilena en el nuevo contexto político", en *Diplomacia*, Number 60, December, 1992, and Alberto Van Klaveren, "Continuidad y cambio en la política exterior chilena", in Torcuato Di Tella (ed.), *Argentina-Chile. ¿Desarrollos Paralelos?*, Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano/Instituto del Servicio Exterior de la Nación, 1997.

³⁶ For more details on this aspect, see Mónica Hirst, "Security Policies, Democratization and Regional Integration in the Southern Cone", *Serie de Documentos e Informes de Investigación*, N° 184, FLACSO/Argentina, August 1995.

As far as the foreign policy-making process, the Argentine case under the period studied shows that neither levels of coordination and consultation between and intra agencies (unity-fragmentation of the decision-making process) nor of participation (centralization-decentralization of this same process) depend on the nature of the regime. This is a quite interesting conclusion because it goes against conventional wisdom. However, democratization seems to favor the progressive decentralization of this process; that is, it helps to increase the number of actors participating in the same.

Regarding belief systems and foreign policy, two clear conclusions stem from the Argentine case. First, that foreign policy orientations and specific policies were highly consistent with leader's beliefs. The problem lay, in reality, in identifying in what measure and under what specific circumstances beliefs had an independent effect on some aspects of foreign policy. In spite of this difficulty, it seems true that certain concrete aspects of Argentina's foreign policy of the period can be partially explained by the beliefs of actors that occupied the highest positions in the "ultimate decision units". It also seems certain that some contextual beliefs of these same individuals serve to explain many decisions that resulted in great failures (the decision to militarily occupy the Malvinas) or that led the wrong way (for instance, Alfonsín's belief that a diplomacy of prestige would suffice to obtain economic help from the European governments or more benign attitude from external debt creditors). And second, that main changes of belief systems were a result of a combination of different variables, and that democratization has been less important than other domestic and external factors. For example, the defeat in the Malvinas war, the systematic violations of human rights by the military regime, or the end of the Cold War, which vastly contributed to a positive reassessment of democratic values and "instrumental" beliefs, such as conciliation and bargaining, that, in turn, have had a significant influence on the foreign behavior of the Alfonsín and Menem administrations. However, democratization has played a key role in helping to institutionalize a new belief system through the socialization of new ideas about "how the world works" and new social identities and practices that seem to be strongly internalized by most of Argentine society. Moreover, this new belief system has also been institutionalized by means of a cognitive and behavioral process of mutual and positive reinforcement, from one country to another in the Southern Cone.