

FOREIGN POLICY IN ARGENTINA,  
BRAZIL, AND CHILE:  
The Burden of the Past, the Hope for the Future

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- ANTARCTICA AND SOUTH AMERICAN GEOPOLITICS: FROZEN LEBENS-  
RAUM.* By Jack Child. (New York: Praeger, 1988. Pp. 232. \$39.95.)
- GEOPOLITICS OF THE SOUTHERN CONE AND ANTARCTICA.* By Philip  
Kelly and Jack Child. (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1988. Pp. 273.  
\$35.00.)
- ARGENTINA BETWEEN THE GREAT POWERS, 1939–46.* By Guido Di Tella  
and D. Cameron Watt. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press,  
1990. Pp. 212. \$39.95.)
- UNEQUAL GIANTS: DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES  
AND BRAZIL, 1889–1930.* By Joseph Smith. (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of  
Pittsburgh Press, 1991. Pp. 296. \$39.95.)
- BRAZIL AND THE SOVIET CHALLENGE, 1917–1947.* By Stanley E. Hilton.  
(Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991. Pp. 287. \$37.50.)
- HISTORIA DA POLITICA EXTERIOR DO BRASIL.* By Amado Luiz Cervo and  
Clodoaldo Bueno. (São Paulo: Atica, 1992. Pp. 432.)
- GREAT POWER RELATIONS IN ARGENTINA, CHILE, AND ANTARCTICA.* Ed-  
ited by Michael A. Morris. (New York: St. Martin's, 1990. Pp. 210. \$49.95.)
- AVERTING A LATIN AMERICAN NUCLEAR ARMS RACE: NEW PROSPECTS  
AND CHALLENGES FOR ARGENTINIAN-BRAZILIAN NUCLEAR COOPERA-  
TION.* Edited by Paul L. Leventhal and Sharon Tanzer. (New York: St.  
Martin's, 1992. Pp. 257. \$69.95.)

Redemocratization and the end of the cold war are heralding a new era in Latin America. Anti-communist phobia and militarism now seem such a fundamental part of the failures of the past forty-five years that their passing inevitably stimulates hopes for new domestic and foreign policies that will finally address the human and material needs of the region. But what is the basis for this hope for significantly distinct domestic and foreign policies?

In looking to the future, scholars turn to the past to explain the present. Each of these eight books explores history not just for its own sake but to help explain what has happened in the contemporary period,

primarily in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (compare Smith, p. vii, with Hilton, pp. xi–xii). These books, especially the edited ones, cover more material than can be covered in this brief review essay. It will proceed by examining the four approaches most commonly utilized by these authors: the international distribution of power, geopolitics, domestic politics, and domestic political institutions. I will then turn to the issue of nuclear proliferation, which has provoked particularly contentious debate over cooperation versus conflict. The essay will end by offering a few suggestions for promising avenues of research.

*Determinants of International Policy*

These analyses of the foreign policies adopted by Argentina, Brazil, and Chile advance an array of competing explanations. All the authors begin with the concept of international power disparity as a fundamental determinant of foreign policy, not only toward the great powers but also among South American states. None of the authors believe that power disparity constitutes a unicausal model for explaining the foreign-policy choices made by Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Each analyst presents competing visions of how international and domestic variables interact to make foreign policy, but all find that international power disparity helps to explain the results of the policies adopted by Argentina, Brazil, and Chile.

Geopolitics offers a way of thinking about the international relationship between geography and power politics. In this model of foreign policy, the international determinant of power disparity is filtered through a particular geopolitical understanding of a country's niche in world politics. In *Antarctica and South American Geopolitics: Frozen Lebensraum*, Jack Child focuses on how the role assigned to the frozen continent by various geopolitical models used by South American militaries has influenced policy toward the region. Readers unfamiliar with the historical evolution of geopolitics in South America will find this book rewarding. Child notes variations across geopolitical models and the manner in which policy recommendations (or "geostrategies") vary according to the geographic situation of each South American country. He also presents the rich history of competing geopolitical schools within each country.

Two major problems limit the contributions of *Antarctica and South American Geopolitics* to an understanding of foreign policy. First, the catalogue of different geopolitical schools is interesting, but Child does not explain why one particular school flourished at any particular time and place. Was the geostrategy advocated by that school particularly suited to that historical moment, or did the adherents of a particular school gain dominance and then seek to impose a geopolitical model on the nation? Second, although some schools of thought emphasize cooperation among

neighbors, Child finds that geopolitics has served largely to justify competition. He therefore concludes that peace and cooperation in the region require democratic institutions powerful enough to rein in the chauvinistic tendencies of practitioners of South American geopolitics (p. 204). Nevertheless, Child's assertions that democracy and geopolitics will not mix and that democracy will do a better job of preserving transborder peace require serious study before they can be accepted as guides to the future.<sup>1</sup>

*Geopolitics of the Southern Cone and Antarctica*, coedited by Child and Philip Kelly, brings together sixteen essays by leading students and practitioners of South American geopolitics. Overlapping somewhat with Child's *Antarctica and South American Geopolitics*, this collection of essays is more optimistic that the cooperative strain of South American geopolitics can predominate over the competitive one. Chapters by Rubén de Hoyos, Therezinha de Castro, and Carlos de Meira Mattos propose geostrategies designed to build on the international strategic importance of the southern oceans and Antarctica. Child's review of the literature in his own book along with the chapters in this volume by Child, Leslie Hepple, and Kelly provide good critiques of those exaggerated claims. Students of foreign policy will find two contributions by César Caviedes and Howard Pittman particularly worthy.

Caviedes suggests interesting, although poorly integrated, answers to the questions of why geopolitical models come to dominate military perceptions of foreign policy and why Southern Cone countries (including Brazil) have developed the most elaborated models. Territorial ambiguities and sparsely populated borders (remnants of the colonial era) provoke fear of attack as well as the temptation to seize valuable disputed lands. When these factors are combined with an organic view of the state (it grows, matures, and ultimately dies) and the experiences of conquest, a militarist ideology develops not only among the military but also among "well-educated civilians" (pp. 13, 17–18). Caviedes also finds that "nationalists of all shades" use geopolitical doctrines emphasizing competition with neighboring states to divert attention from the need to improve sociopolitical conditions at home (p. 28). In his view, "the peoples of the Southern Cone nations" have incorporated these views into their national myths to the degree that attempting to modify these geopolitical tenets significantly is considered treasonous (p. 29).

Yet despite these arguments that the supremacy of geopolitics in foreign policy results from the interests of the military, "well-educated civilians," "nationalists of all shades," and "the people," Caviedes inex-

1. During the heyday of ABC geopolitics, roughly the forty years between 1945 and 1985, the only war that occurred was the Malvinas/Falklands War in 1982. And in this instance, one of the countries (Great Britain) was a democracy whose strategy was not dominated by geopolitics.

plicably focuses exclusively on the military in discussing the future. He is pessimistic about the long-term prospects of the geopolitics of economic integration "as long as there exist military establishments ready to justify their existence, competition, and desires 'to be the first'" (p. 29). Caviedes's analysis nonetheless offers strong incentives for examining how social actors reproduce the underlying geopolitical logic of South American foreign policies and what this process implies for foreign policy-making in a democratic context.

Pittman's contribution to *Geopolitics of the Southern Cone and Antarctica* evaluates a proposition merely assumed by many analysts: that relations among democratic systems will be less conflictual than among previous nondemocratic regimes. He examines six cases: the Peruvian-Bolivian-Chilean coastal conflict; the "national sea" debates; the Beagle Channel and Malvinas/Falklands disputes; Antarctica; and the U.S.–Latin American relationship in general. In each instance, democratic governments defined national interests in much the same way as their authoritarian predecessors. In the U.S.–Latin American case, Pittman argues that the new democratic regimes' desire for independent foreign policies actually increased discord. He also makes a claim that has already become dated: that democracy in South America undermined hemispheric security in the sense that the Soviet Union could take advantage of this search for independence "to encircle the United States in its own hemisphere" (p. 50). Pittman concludes that the impact of democratization on geopolitics and conflict has been minimal so far and that the potential exists for its having a negative impact in the future. He doubts that a return to authoritarianism would increase international conflict in the region, although it "might provoke more internal insurgencies" (p. 51).

This charge is a strong one, and it merits serious consideration. Unfortunately, Pittman has misunderstood the arguments forwarded by advocates of democratic foreign policies. First, he has confused "disagreement" with "conflict." Analysts of international relations do not expect "harmony" in the sense of a complete convergence of interests. "Cooperation" results when an initial disagreement is resolved as the parties realize that mutual adjustment furthers the longer-term goals of both sides. The chapter by Margaret Clark in the same volume summarizes this position, and Pittman would have done well to address it. In addition, the thesis regarding democratic foreign policy is not that democracies have no conflicts among themselves or with others or that they resolve all their disputes but rather that when democracies resolve disagreements among themselves, they do so without recourse to war. Thus democratic governments may advocate some of the same positions as authoritarian governments (as in claiming the Malvinas as Argentine territory), but they are expected not to consider violent resolution of disagreements as legitimate.

Both Caviedes and Pittman suggest that Latin Americanists must look to domestic politics to achieve a better understanding of foreign policy. The remaining six books follow up on this theme.

In *Argentina between the Great Powers, 1939–46*, Guido Di Tella and Cameron Watt have collected a stimulating group of essays on the situation in which Argentina found itself following its neutrality policy during World War II. The issue of power distribution underlies the premise of this book. By 1941 a shift in the international distribution of power was taking place, a change detrimental to Argentina's patron, Great Britain, and favoring one of Argentina's traditional rivals in the hemisphere, the United States. *Argentina between the Great Powers* analyzes the making of British and U.S. foreign policy toward Argentina as well as that country's own foreign policy. The key questions for Argentina were whether the shift would be temporary or long-term and how to respond. The challenge for analysts of Argentine foreign policy is to explain the Argentine decision to bet on Britain's continuance as a great power while flirting with Nazi Germany as a possible counterweight to the United States.

Watt's introduction makes three points that permeate the remaining essays. First, shifts in power distribution are difficult to gauge accurately at the time they occur, and hence one must be careful in judging British and Argentine perceptions of their relative strengths vis-à-vis the United States. In addition, because the United States after World War I had the power but not the will to play an international role, the possibility existed that less-powerful countries might still play fundamental roles in shaping the postwar world. Finally, although Argentina was no more than a minor irritant in the U.S.-British relationship during World War II, the bilateral relationship between the United States and Britain was fundamental to Argentina.

The evolution of the U.S.-British relationship influenced Argentine foreign policy significantly. Contributions by Alec Campbell and Warren Kimball present respectively a British and a U.S. view, while Di Tella provides an Argentine perspective. Campbell notes that British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was aware of British weaknesses and sought U.S. help to overcome them in areas perceived as vital to Britain's European standing: the war against Germany, Britain's role in Asia, and British economics. But Argentina played no major part in British calculations because the British recognized a special status for the United States in the Americas. The British were mainly interested in Argentine meat for the war effort, which the Argentines were willing to provide; and U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt was willing to let the British buy Argentine meat while the war was going on. Thus Argentine expectations of a British counterweight to U.S. pressure were misplaced.

Critics of bureaucratic analyses have pointed out that when an issue comes to a president's attention, the opportunity for bureaucrats to

carry out a policy independently decreases dramatically.<sup>2</sup> Campbell's and Kimball's essays demonstrate that when bureaucratic decisions concerning Argentina threatened the Allies' ability to carry out the war effectively, both Churchill and Roosevelt intervened to make that particular Argentine policy conform to alliance needs (see Campbell, pp. 2–3, and Kimball, pp. 22–29). The heyday of U.S. Ambassador Spruille Braden's anti-Perón campaign occurred between the de facto defeat of Nazi Germany and the start of the cold war. U.S. economic intentions in Latin America could not prevail over bureaucratic politics, hence the subordination of Nelson Rockefeller's international business approach to Braden's hegemonic liberal ideological approach. Only when the cold war broke out did the U.S. executive focus its attention on reaching an understanding with Juan Perón.

Contributions to *Argentina between the Great Powers* by Joseph Tulchin and Carlos Escudé provide the most developed claims for how disparity in international power interacted with domestic variables in Argentine foreign policy. For Tulchin, a country's foreign policy reflects the needs of its political and, above all, economic national project. Argentina's search for a counterweight to the United States largely resulted from the competitiveness of the two economies. Stanley Hilton's accompanying chapter on Brazil demonstrates the converse: the importance of economic complementarity for good relations. Negotiations to guarantee Argentine access to the British economy during the 1930s, although probably unavoidable in the short run, tied Argentina to Britain as the latter was being eclipsed by the United States. In short, given Argentina's economic project, its leaders could hardly have been expected to act differently.

An alternative perspective is forcefully argued by Escudé. He considers Perón's nationalist foreign policy after 1946 to have been just as misplaced as that of the agro-exporting oligarchy in the early 1940s. To oppose the United States at the moment when it was consolidating its international position was "irrational," whatever the Argentine elite's ultimate goal. Similar responses by elites with distinct political personalities and national projects lead Escudé to focus on Argentine political culture, which he claims resulted in an "irrationality syndrome" in foreign policy (pp. 68–71).

Joseph Smith's *Unequal Giants: Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Brazil, 1889–1930* also focuses on the interaction between international and domestic factors. The power disparity invoked in the title sets the context, and the political-economic regime (1889–1930, the years of the Old Republic) would seem to have been the primary factor determining how Brazil would respond.

2. See Robert J. Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973):467–90.

The global and regional power position of the United States has been the basic determinant of U.S. policy toward Brazil. Brazilian interests have been routinely subordinated to the U.S.-European relationship, as demonstrated in the fiascoes with the Hague and the League of Nations. At the regional level, Brazilian efforts to persuade the United States to recognize the primacy of Brazil have been doomed to failure because U.S. hemispheric leadership requires that it not play favorites among the region's middle powers. In addition, mediation by Argentina, Brazil, and Chile of inter-American disputes (as in the case of U.S. intervention during the Mexican Revolution) must always be diluted by the presence of other Latin American states to ensure that alternative hemispheric leadership does not develop.

Smith demonstrates that the fundamental dilemma in Brazilian foreign policy stems from its leadership's desire to use the Brazilian relationship with the United States to lead Latin America and in the process be treated as an equal by the great powers. But U.S. global and hemispheric interests demand such close identification with U.S. views that Brazil is constantly in danger of being perceived by other Latin American nations as a defender of U.S. subordination of Latin America rather than an interlocutor with the United States. Hence one explanation for the erratic shifts in Brazilian allegiance to the United States is that they have resulted from alternate responses to this dilemma.

Brazilian foreign policy has also been affected by the incongruence between national goals and means. Despite the country's perception of itself as a major power, the realities of a weak military, an underdeveloped economy, and political instability have combined to keep the Brazilians outside the halls of power. Lacking the capacity to meet its own goals, Brazil resentfully attacked great power privilege at the Hague conference in 1907 and quit the League of Nations after that organization offered Germany a permanent seat on its council but denied Brazil equal status.

Smith's *Unequal Giants* notes the bureaucratic and personality details of policy without giving them excessive causal weight. Unfortunately, however, Smith's analysis suffers from too much attention to detail and not enough integration of the parts. In addition, he often contradicts himself in interpreting events and data. For example, Smith's final evaluation of the U.S.-Brazilian relationship is far more favorable and optimistic than his study warrants. Significantly, by the end of the book, Smith still has not demonstrated that the interests specific to the political-economic coalition behind the Old Republic actually led Brazil to undertake a foreign policy that differed fundamentally from those before 1889 and after 1930.

Stanley Hilton's contribution to the domestic determinants debate comes via an analysis of the foreign policy of Brazil toward the Soviet Union. In *Brazil and the Soviet Challenge, 1917-1947*, he argues that the civilian and military elite controlling Brazilian foreign policy from 1917 to

1947 also wielded significant influence over domestic policy. Extreme anti-communist sentiments dominated the group and were reinforced by the Comintern's support of an abortive revolt in Brazil in 1932. The internal consequences of the clash of these domestic and international forces was the authoritarianism of the Estado Novo. International repercussions included Brazil's active (although clandestine) espionage policy throughout southern South America and a confrontational policy of not recognizing the Soviet Union.

*Brazil and the Soviet Challenge* is rich in detail and convincing in its portrayal of the extreme anti-communism of the Brazilian foreign-policy elite. A better case for its argument could have been constructed, however, had Hilton followed the methodological approach used in the Di Tella and Watt volume and integrated his particular subject matter (Brazilian-Soviet relations) into the larger context of international and domestic politics (about which he has written extensively elsewhere). Failure to take this analytic path resulted in two major problems.

First, Brazilian hard-line anti-communists disagreed about whether a democratic or an authoritarian political system offered the best defense. Given this dispute, the domination of Brazilian politics by the authoritarian faction cannot be explained by its extreme anti-communism. Another major shortcoming arises from the authoritarian nature of this dominant group, which was not directed simply against communists and liberals (who could be duped by communists) but also against the right-wing, authoritarian Integralists. In sum, the members of the Brazilian authoritarian elite opposed anyone who might wrest power from them.

Amado Cervo's and Clodoaldo Bueno's *História da Política Exterior do Brasil* provides a historical interpretation of Brazilian foreign policy from independence to the present. The authors are self-consciously social scientific in identifying models, variables, and especially evidence and questions of causation. Cervo and Bueno define national interests in terms of national autonomy and socioeconomic development within the context created by a capitalist world economy. The first part (written by Bueno) analyzes the period from independence to the end of the empire, while the second part (by Cervo) and the third (by Bueno) become overwhelmingly descriptive.

*História da Política Exterior do Brasil* seeks to identify the determinants of Brazilian foreign policy and to evaluate its contribution to national development. The international context, in which Brazil is not a great power, has provided the country with both opportunities and constraints. Cervo and Bueno claim that from the beginning, the opportunities allowed for a Brazilian foreign policy that would serve national development needs (see the critique of Dom Pedro's foreign policy, pp. 20–34). The ability to make choices in line with national interests depends on political capacity (state strength) and political will (elite choices).



According to Cervo and Bueno, Brazil developed this capacity and will very early (in the 1840s) by establishing institutions such as Itamarati (the foreign ministry) and the Council of State, along with a sophisticated political elite and a well-trained diplomatic corps. The authors rate various foreign policy choices as good (especially after 1967) and poor (those of Dom Pedro and Humberto Castelo Branco). In their view, the choices themselves, although not the results, were determined overwhelmingly by domestic factors.

The key domestic variables for Cervo and Bueno in Brazilian foreign policy seem to have been the beliefs of the elite. Ideological perspectives (like liberalism in the nineteenth century and occidentalism in the 1960s) led to policies that undermined national autonomy and development. Pragmatic realist beliefs have been the most beneficial. But Cervo and Bueno do not explain these beliefs. Readers learn only that their origins cannot be found in party or social pressure (see the discussion of tariff policy in the middle of the nineteenth century) nor in military professionalism (compare the discussion of the foreign policies of Castelo Branco and Arthur da Costa e Silva).

At the end of *História da Política Exterior do Brasil*, Cervo and Bueno claim that democracy will allow Latin America to respond to the unfavorable international capitalist situation (characterized by the debt crisis and Northern protectionism in commerce and technology transfer) by means of regional integration. But no links are postulated among democracy, elite choices, and national development to explain how this outcome will occur.

Michael Morris's edited collection of essays, *Great Power Relations in Argentina, Chile, and Antarctica*, is methodologically rich but suffers from an unlikely premise and a lack of integration. Power disparity is viewed as a key factor, whether in Jan Knippers Black's polemical dependency approach to inter-American affairs, Rubén de Hoyos's examination of how Argentine and Soviet national interests shaped the three phases of their relationship (diplomatic, economic, and incipient military), or the traditional balance of power approach used in Fred Parkinson's analysis of politics among South American countries. I expected a lively debate among the contributors over the implications of their different variables in the context of Argentine and Chilean relations with the great powers. But the essayists never engage each other, and the analyses move in such different directions that Morris's attempts to tie them together ultimately fail.

The premise of *Great Power Relations*—that a “unique five-cornered relationship” exists among the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union, Argentina, and Chile—is not supported by the other books reviewed here. Although Cynthia Watson perceives Brazil's relationship with the great powers as differing significantly because of Brazil's economic power,

the other studies argue convincingly that Brazil has labored under the same constraints as other Latin American countries with similar outcomes in economic, technological, military, and diplomatic arenas. Morris's attempt to use Peter Calvert's essay to lend coherence to *Great Power Relations* by calling the British a "great power" also fails. Calvert himself demonstrates that Britain was engaged in a worldwide retreat and that its policy toward the Americas was significantly affected by U.S. policy. This is hardly the foreign policy of a great power, as Di Tella and Watt demonstrate clearly in *Argentina between the Great Powers*.

*South American Cooperation: Possibilities and International Implications*

Paul Leventhal's and Sharon Tanzer's edited volume contains proceedings of a conference held one year before the signing of a bilateral accord between Argentina and Brazil on nuclear cooperation. The meeting was organized by the Nuclear Control Institute. The title, *Averting a Latin American Nuclear Arms Race: New Prospects and Challenges for Argentinian-Brazilian Nuclear Cooperation*, is a misnomer. The positions taken by the non-Latin American presenters demonstrate a concern that the two South American countries might settle their traditional rivalry and jointly become nuclear weapons states. Hence arises their insistence on the need for the international nonproliferation community to be a party to Argentine-Brazilian confidence-building measures.

*Averting a Latin American Nuclear Arms Race* brings out the worst about the North-South relationship. The official Argentine, Brazilian, and Uruguayan presenters attack the privileged position of the nuclear weapons states in making nuclear weapons and technological progress. They correctly point out that the nonproliferation regime has focused on keeping others out of the "club" (avoiding horizontal proliferation) but has ignored the dramatic proliferation undertaken by the nuclear weapons states themselves (promoting vertical and geographical proliferation). The next section espouses relatively extreme positions on sovereignty, followed by pious statements on South-South cooperation, like as the claim that Argentina and Brazil have enough trust in each other to obviate the need for formalized safeguards and confidence-building measures.

For their part, the representatives and advocates of the North-dominated nonproliferation regime recognize shortcomings in efforts to transfer technology to the countries who play by the rules as well as Northern failure to abide by the principles underlying the nonproliferation regime. The developing countries are told nevertheless that they must conform if they want to advance because the North controls access to the technology. The developing countries are even asked to set an example for the nuclear weapons states to emulate!

*Averting a Latin American Nuclear Arms Race* becomes most interest-

ing in the anonymous discussions reported by each panel, especially among some South American participants who dispute the official claims of civilian control and confidence among all. The rapporteur's summary is well done. This volume offers a good introduction to the issues but provides little information or perspective that is new. Nor can it help explain the 1990 treaty, except as an imposition by international pressure. As the other books reviewed here demonstrate, this explanation of foreign policy is clearly inadequate, particularly with regard to the bilateral provisions of the treaty.

Review of these eight books suggests that the literature on foreign policy in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile has contributed interesting case studies but needs further development. A fruitful research agenda could be organized around the international context of the cold war, which virtually all analysts agree has influenced Latin American politics significantly. The most promising areas to explore seem to be geopolitics, economic structure, institutional frameworks for policy-making, and national cultures. Collaborative work, such as that represented by Di Tella and Watt's *Argentina between the Great Powers*, could accelerate progress if authors build on each other's work. Social science works best when dialogue highlights areas of disagreement and authors pay particular attention to convincing their colleagues of the relative merits of hypothesized causal links.