



Southern Latin American Multilateralism?

Argentina on the Security Council, 2013–2014

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- n Argentina's vision of multilateralism is characterized by a quest for balance between state sovereignty and the responsibility of the international community to ensure the observance of a minimum standard of principles such as human rights.
- n Four elements may influence the country's performance on the UN-SC: 1) a strong questioning of multilateral credit organizations and demand for their reform, 2) the search for new markets due to a delicate economic financial situation, 3) a focus on Latin America as a priority, 4) the resolution of the Malvinas (Falklands) issue.
- n The Malvinas issue is one of significant political importance on which the government might capitalize on the Council in 2013 – an election year in Argentina, one marking 180 years of the islands' occupation by Britain and thirty years after the return to democracy.
- n The surprising agreement with Iran to investigate the Argentine-Israeli Mutual Association (AMIA) bombing raises questions about a possible change in Argentina's position with respect to international terrorism. It opens up the possibility that the country will soften its critical tone with regards to Iran on the UN-SC.
- n It is possible to infer that Argentina will seek to position itself as a prominent Latin American voice with regards to the global agenda. Argentina's relationship with Brazil is of particular interest since the latter has expressed its desire to obtain a permanent Security Council seat, which Argentina opposes.

1. Historical Background

During the previous eight periods in which Argentina held a non-permanent seat on the Security Council,¹ its affirmative votes on relevant resolutions reflect a kind of formula balanced between a recognition of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a state – which can be translated as a traditional conception of sovereignty and security – and the acknowledgment of the international community's responsibility in keeping the peace, fostering development, and upholding human rights across national boundaries.

In quantitative terms, when given the vote the country has gone along with the organization's decisions. In fact, of the 595 resolutions voted upon during the periods in which Argentina participated, 588 received votes in favor and none received a vote against.² During six decades of participation in the highest deliberative body of the United Nations, Argentina has cooperated positively in collective decision making, not only by voting but by actively contributing to the relevant debates.³

2. Argentina's Agenda and Priorities for 2013–2014

Central Themes of the Kirchner and Fernández de Kirchner Administrations

The current administration defines itself as a continuation of the «national and popular» project begun on May 25, 2003 when Néstor Kirchner (2003–2007) assumed the presidency. Marked by the necessity of dealing with the consequences of the economic and financial debacle that resulted in its declaration of default at the end of 2001,⁴

the first Kirchner administration displayed, in terms of foreign policy, three distinctive features, the continuity of which can be seen in the two subsequent administrations under his wife Cristina Fernández (2007–2011 and 2011 to the present). These are: (a) a strong questioning of multilateral credit organizations and a demand for their reform, (b) a distancing from traditional sources of financing and an ongoing search for new commercial markets, and (c) a focus on Latin America that is in line with the new styles of leadership arising in the Southern Cone, that give priority to local realities and are more openly critical of the United States.

As a result, over the past ten years Argentine foreign policy has been characterized as strongly in favor of economic and political autonomy and for recognition of the country's southern and South American nature: southern in a geostrategic sense, which explains the recent renewal of claims of the Malvinas as national territory; Latin American in terms of political alignment with other center-left governments in the region. This is evidenced by the creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in 2008 – the first Secretary General of which was Néstor Kirchner – and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2011, both characterized by a drive to promulgate a regional identity.

Current International Agenda: Macroeconomic Challenges and Political Impact

Argentina heightened its profile regarding three key aspects in 2012 and early 2013: (a) the negotiation of its foreign debt with the entities behind so-called «vulture funds,» (b) the breaking of the status quo with Iran relevant to the 1994 terrorist AMIA attack in Buenos Aires, which is attributed to the Hezbollah movement using funding from that Islamic nation, and (c) the renewal of the dispute over the Malvinas Islands being Argentine territory. All of these occur within a local context of political polarization, upcoming Congressional elections, and uncertainty for the future of the political model.

Foreign Debt: Holdout and Macroeconomic Perspectives

The steady and extraordinary economic recovery that Argentina experienced between 2004 and 2010, with

1. The eight periods are: 1948–1949, 1959–1960, 1966–1967, 1971–1972, 1987–1988, 1994–1995, 1999–2000, 2005–2006, 2013–2014.

2. Argentina's votes on the seven remaining resolutions consisted of six abstentions and one case of «non-participation». This last case was with Resolution S/RES/138, «Question Relating to the Case of Adolf Eichmann» in which, given that Argentina was part of the controversy (the resolution deals with the violation of sovereignty by the Israeli intelligence service), it did not vote, according to the stipulations of Article 27(3) of the Charter of the UN. See also: <http://www.un.org/es/documents/charter/chapter5.shtml>.

3. For more information see: http://unbisnet.un.org:8080/ipac20/ipac.jsp?menu=search&aspect=power&npp=50&ipp=20&spp=20&profile=speech&ri=&index=.SC&term=Argentina&limitbox_1=SI01+%3D+si_s.

4. For more information on the development of the crisis in Argentina and the role played in it by multilateral credit organisms, see Eichengreen, B., 1996: *Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System*, Princeton Ed., pp. 205–210.

annual growth rates that reached 9.2%,⁵ occurred alongside unprecedented renegotiation of debts with private creditors holding bonds. Approximately 93% of these creditors agreed to deduct 65% of the original sum of indebtedness. Argentina's posture has been confrontational with regards to private creditors, who have demonstrated a capacity for public action that has not only limited the ability of the country to dispose of its national assets, but more importantly checked its efforts to access credit needed to finance a weakened economy.

With a projected economic growth rate of about 3.1% (0.5% below the IMF⁶ projection for Latin America), an inflation index that has been in two digits for ninety months, questionable price-control methods, and management of official statistics that has not been clear – resulting in a recent motion for censure on the part of the IMF⁷ – macroeconomic projections for 2013 are discouraging. In light of this, the opening of new markets is crucial, and this aspect of foreign policy has begun to take on more relevance in recent months, with overtures to African and Asian countries that have been historically distant on the country's map of commercial partners.

Although some studies⁸ prove that those states occupying non-permanent seats on the Security Council have better chances of securing international financing, they focus on the role of multilateral credit institutions, a component of debt which Argentina has systematically marginalized since 2003 (initially as a result of its financial insolvency, and from 2005 onward due to the issue of repayment of the IMF debt). One aspect in which this priority of the Argentine agenda may be reflected in the nation's conduct on the Security Council has to do with in what way, if any, its vote may influence the behavior of countries in which demands for debt repayment have been made, the Unicoastted States in particular.

Iran and International Terrorism

In relation to the previous section,⁹ the surprising announcement of an agreement with Iran, a significant turn in Argentina's policies regarding that Islamic nation and its controversial government, opens up questions about a possible change in Argentina's stance on the issue of international terrorism.

Since the first Kirchner administration, Argentina had systematically denounced Iran's support of international terrorism before the UN General Assembly, identifying Iran as responsible for the worst terrorist attack suffered by Argentina: the bombing of the building that housed the seat of the AMIA on July 18, 1994, claiming the lives of 85 people.¹⁰ However, in September of 2012, Argentina announced an opening of the lines of bilateral communication that would bring the two countries closer with regards to the AMIA issue, resulting in the signing of a »memorandum of understanding« on January 27, 2013 in Ethiopia. The agreement enables Argentine judicial authorities to »interrogate« the Iranian suspects in Tehran, who are the subjects of international arrest warrants, and it allows for the creation of a »truth commission« composed of five international jurists, whose aim is to analyze the documentation in the possession of the judges and create a »non-binding« report on what they feel is necessary. The agreement was approved on February 28, 2013 by a narrow margin in the Argentine Congress. It was strongly rejected by the Argentine Jewish community, who consider it a blatant renouncement of the search for justice and a capitulation to Iranian interests.

The argument put forth by President Fernandez de Kirchner can be summed up as the »need« to avoid stagnation in an affair that is nearly two decades old. It is doubtless remarkable that an agreement of this kind on a topic so delicate in terms of public feeling should be arrived at with such haste. This has led to conclusions that the true motivation behind it is the need to find new partners in commerce and to realign strategic priorities.

5. See »Estudio Económico de América Latina y el Caribe 2011–2012«, Comisión Económica de las Naciones Unidas para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), Santiago de Chile, 2012.

6. See »IMF World Economic Outlook«, IMF Global available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2013/update/01/index.htm>.

7. »IMF and Argentina: Motion of Censure«, *The Economist*, available at: <http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21571434-fund-blows-whistle-motion-censure>.

8. Ver Dreher, Axel et. al., 2009: »Global Horse Trading: IMF Loans for Votes in the United Nations Security Council« in *European Economic Review* 53 (7):742–757. Available online at: http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jrv24/unsc_imf.html.

9. The opposition has cited trade relations between Argentina and Iran as the primary reason for going forward with the AMIA investigation agreement. In fact, commerce between the two countries has been increasing significantly in recent years. Argentine exports to Iran totaled USD \$1.068 billion in 2011, according to recent data of the Ministry of External Affairs (available at: <http://www.cei.gov.ar/node/26>).

10. The target of the previous attack was the Israeli Embassy in Argentina. It occurred on March 17, 1992, killing 29 people and wounding 242. There have been no arrests related to that attack.

From this it is possible to deduce that, without necessarily altering its general position regarding international terrorism – the country subscribes to twelve of the fourteen international entities regulating terrorism and goes along with majority decisions on it in international organizations – or the defense of non-proliferation – it has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is a leader in the peaceful use of nuclear energy – Argentina may soften its critical tone regarding Iran in the UN Security Council.

Malvinas

The reclaiming of the Malvinas Islands constitutes a banner issue of the Kirchner administration's foreign policy. This has been especially true during the past two years, which have been full of related observances and anniversaries. The central theme of the claim is that the location of the Malvinas archipelago and South Atlantic islands is within 200 nautical miles of Argentine territory and that they are part of the continental shelf on that territory. This being the case, the occupation of the territory by British forces on January 3, 1833 constitutes a flagrant violation of national sovereignty. This line of argument was validated by the UN on December 16, 1965 through Resolution A/RES/2065. This resolution – as well as other subsequently adopted ones on the issue that refer to it – are key to the Argentine position that »it be taken into consideration« that there exists a dispute of sovereignty between the two nations and that an invitation to the negotiation table is extended for bilateral discussions.

This formula, adopted within the context of decolonization, underscores that in the case of the Malvinas, the principle of self-determination of peoples does not apply, since the population in question is a »transplanted« one and not original. The argument is recognized as a triumph of Argentine diplomacy and is often reiterated in official public statements as a clear and certain indication that the UN calls for the two states to negotiate – the two states only, without third parties and aside from the fact that the well-being of the islands' inhabitants is involved.

After the 1982 war – that attempt at the recuperation of national territory by force under the last Argentine military dictatorship, the resounding failure of which catalyzed the return to democracy – the UN General Assembly upheld this argument with Resolution A/RES/37/9

of November 9, 1982, which reiterates the call for both parties to negotiate a peaceful solution to the dispute.

Because of the geostrategic potential of the islands and possible petroleum reserves of the continental shelf, the claim to the islands ceases to be exclusively territorial and becomes part of strategic positioning, especially with regards to the Antarctic projection. The Malvinas carry significant political weight. It is no surprise, then, that in an election year like 2013 – and one marking 180 years of the islands' occupation by Britain and thirty years of the process of returning to democracy – attempts are made to use the Malvinas issue as a cohesive factor for the party currently in charge of the national government.

As a result, it is likely that Argentina will capitalize on the Security Council as a platform for voicing its claim for the fulfillment of the General Assembly's resolutions. Since in terms of procedure the Malvinas issue is handled by the Special Committee on Decolonization,¹¹ such use of the Security Council would have to be in purely declaratory terms and run the risk of straining the procedural rules of that highest executive body.

Various representatives of the Argentine government have denounced the militarization of the South Atlantic by Great Britain, in clear violation of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean, known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, an international agreement in effect since April 25, 1969. This is supported by UNASUR and by the members of the Summit of South American-Arab Countries (ASPA). The claim, an important topic of the Security Council, is likely to be brought up despite the absence of a clear and direct threat to the peace and security of the region. Dealing with it would not be a UN priority, and the raising of the issue would only serve to reinforce attempts by Argentine leaders to place the Malvinas question before the public eye.

11. In 2012 President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner delivered a speech before that committee, the first time a chief of state has done so in the history of the committee.

3. Argentina on the Security Council: Dynamics among Key Actors

Leadership of the Latin American Group

Argentina has a long history of cooperation with and active participation in a variety of multilateral forums. The most recent example is the country's presiding over the Group of 77 plus China in 2011 which produced good results in terms of the articulation of diverse interests and the initiation of dialogue on topics for the agenda.¹² It is likely that the leadership demonstrated there played a key role in Argentina's becoming a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. According to strategic priorities mentioned by the Argentine delegation to the UN,¹³ it is possible to deduce that the country will seek to be spokesperson for the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)¹⁴ for topics on the global agenda.

Despite the recent institutionalization of efforts for regional integration and significant advances in the articulation of policies, Latin America is not a uniform region. Rival leaders and differing positions exist, especially regarding the United States. Argentina and Brazil are unified by a recent tradition of economic cooperation, but differ – at least as far as the UN is concerned – over the desire Brazil has manifested to hold a permanent seat (with veto power) on the Security Council.

This is probably the greatest item of UN-related disagreement between Argentina and Brazil. The high profile given to the issue of obtaining a permanent seat with veto power for his country by President Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva (2003–2010) caused open objection from the Argentine Chancellery. The basis of this objection was that said veto power collides with the multilateral spirit of the organization. This possible point of tension has been expressed, yet controlled, by both countries in such a way that it has not interfered with advances in regional economics and political coordination. One thing certain

is that currently, the lack of advances in the reform of the Council has lessened tensions over this potential rivalry. Yet as long as there are other countries supporting a »democratically« styled reform of the organization – making it one without permanent seats or veto power – Argentina will maintain its position vis à vis Brazil.

Relevance of Relations with the United States: Argentina on the Security Council

A clear point of potential conflict exists between the US and Argentina if the latter continues its rapprochement with Iran. Despite this, and considering the fact that the power of veto is the primary tool possessed by permanent members of the Security Council, this rapprochement may not have explicit consequences as far as decision making within that body is concerned. In the case of a concrete conflict in which peace and international security are in jeopardy, it is possible to conclude that Argentina will go along with the majority on decisions made on the Security Council.

Indeed, although the Kirchner administrations have publicly maintained a critical viewpoint of US policies of international security, this standpoint has not been reflected in the participation on the UN Security Council. During Argentina's last complete period of participation, for resolutions reaching a vote, the country voted with the US 99% of the time; the remaining 1%, consisting of two instances, were due to abstention. Among Argentina's foreign affairs priorities, the nation's relations with the US play an important role. Argentina has commended the U.S. policy of »neutrality« – or non-interference – on the Malvinas issue, pointing out the adherence by that world power to UN resolutions concerning the dispute.

As far as the rapprochement with Iran is concerned, it is unlikely that this will result in any major change of stance with regards to other items on the global agenda, such as Iran's nuclear program, since Argentina is a staunch defender of non-proliferation. It is nevertheless possible to surmise that Argentina will strengthen its position on the defense of national sovereignty in the face of situations of conflict. The case of Syria is an example. Here we can see once again efforts on the part of Argentina to balance the concern for human rights against that of non-interference, which is set forth in Article 2(4) of the Charter of the United Nations. It can be expected that Ar-

12. Among advances attributable to Argentine leadership is the pledge of continued cooperation between developed and least developed countries set forth in the Istanbul Declaration and Plan of Action at the 4th UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (May 9-13, 2011).

13. For more information, see: Misión Permanente de la República Argentina ante las Naciones Unidas at: <http://enaun.mrecic.gov.ar/content/consejo-de-seguridad-1>.

14. GRULAC is a group for non-binding, informal dialogue that unites 33 UN-member nations from the Latin American-Caribbean region, enabling coordination and consensus on diverse topics.

Argentina will support resolutions that call for the cessation of hostilities and that promote a negotiated settlement to the conflict along the lines of the unsuccessful mission in 2012 led by Kofi Annan, the former special envoy of the UN and the League of Arab States.

Peacekeeping

Argentina has actively participated in UN Peacekeeping Operations for over fifty years. Police and military personnel participate in six of the fourteen UN operations of this type currently underway, with Argentina thereby ranking 28th out of the 114 countries supplying troops. Argentina's most important commitment in terms of supplying troops is for the UN's only Latin American mission, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), where Argentine personnel comprise 67% of the total.

In terms of a comprehensive concept of peacekeeping missions, Argentina has made tangible efforts in striking a balance between the traditional respect for state sovereignty and the responsibility of the international community to promote and respect human rights. Nevertheless, the country does not appear to seek broad participation in peacekeeping operations other than those in which it is currently involved. What can be seen are regular decisions to send specialized personnel to participate in missions of the moment and to promote mechanisms for humanitarian assistance, such as the White Helmets, an initiative created in 1993 and recently validated by the General Assembly in Resolution A/RES/67/84.

4. Argentina and Security Council Reform

Argentina is clearly in favor of a substantive reform of the Security Council that not only modifies the number of permanent and non-permanent members, but also implies qualitative changes in decision-making procedures and working methods. In line with the group referred to as »United for Consensus« – or the »Coffee Club« – Argentina agrees that it is important to eliminate the veto power of permanent members and make decision-making processes more transparent, pluralistic, and democratic. Argentina's position within this group has been perceived as one of disagreement with Brazil and its claims for a permanent seat and representation of

Latin America. However, this emphasis placed on the democratization of working procedures clearly shows that in reality, Argentina's stance is not limited to what might be an eventual rivalry with its main partner in commerce, but is rather comprehensive in nature and in keeping with those of other countries in the world in terms of achieving a substantive reform of the UN's primary executive body.

5. Conclusions

The foreign policy of the current Kirchner administration possesses three characteristics that may influence its performance as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2013–2014 period. These are: the search for new markets and non-traditional alliances, a position that prioritizes Latin America in its political agenda, and the reclamation of the Malvinas Islands as sovereign territory, which emphasizes the role of the UN in breaking the current status quo with regards to Great Britain.

In light of these elements, it is possible to characterize Argentine multilateralism as pre-eminently Southern – in reference to the country's location in the »South«, which places the Malvinas claim in a geostrategic light – and South American, because it identifies itself as part of a region with a particular identity, involving cooperation in efforts for global peace and security but with a primary focus on addressing regional challenges.



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