A FALSE START ON THE ROAD TO MERCOSUR

Reinterpreting Rapprochement Failure between Argentina and Brazil, 1972

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Abstract: To understand the momentous transformation in Argentine-Brazilian relations from rivalry to Mercosur, scholars need to analyze negative cases, when rapprochement was attempted unsuccessfully. This article examines the failed 1972 summit between Presidents Alejandro Agustín Lanusse and Emílio Garrastazú Médici, which is poorly explained by existing theories of international relations and overlooked or misinterpreted in many regional histories. I argue, based on research in the Argentine Foreign Ministry Archives, newly declassified US government documents, and a reexamination of published primary sources, that rapprochement failed in 1972 primarily because bureaucratic interests in the armed forces and foreign ministries of both states depended on the continuation of rivalry. Organizational politics, not popular nationalism or presidential diplomatic errors, best explains the persistence of Argentine-Brazilian conflict in the early 1970s. Successful cooperation between rivals therefore may require not only agreement between national leaders but also the support of the state apparatus on both sides.

One of the most important watersheds in the history of Latin American foreign affairs was the transformation of Argentine-Brazilian relations from four centuries of rivalry to a new partnership that culminated in Mercosur.[1] At first glance, the emergence of Argentine-Brazilian cooperation fits squarely into an "end of history" narrative combining globalization, neoliberalism, the end of the Cold War, and the third wave of democratization (Fukuyama 1992, 39–42, 277; see also Brooks 2005; Solingen 1998; Kacowicz 1998). However, the initial rapprochement occurred much earlier, under the military regimes in 1979–1980, and economic integration proceeded under democratic governments in the 1980s well before neoliberalism arrived (Fraga 1997; Resende-Santos 2002; Kupchan 2010). To understand how Mercosur became politically possible, and why rapprochement

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1. For excellent overviews of the relationship before the 1980s, see Moniz Bandeira 2003, Scenna 1975, and Pomer 1984. In English, a valuable starting point is Hilton 1985. For an overview of the concept of rivalry and the universe of comparable cases, see Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2007.

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occurred when it did, we need to ask and answer a basic question: why didn't Argentina and Brazil cooperate sooner? More concretely, why did previous efforts at bilateral cooperation fail?

Although Argentina and Brazil inherited their rivalry from the Spanish and Portuguese empires, competing for diplomatic influence over neighboring states and maintaining a "hypothesis of conflict" long after mediating their last territorial dispute, the Argentine-Brazilian relationship is also littered with summits at which national leaders tried, unsuccessfully, to overcome protracted conflict (Fraga and de Seixas Corrêa 1998; Aravena 1999, 9–10; Hurrell 1998, 238; Methol Ferré 1996). These episodes are tremendously valuable for two reasons: they offer what political scientists call negative cases, which can be directly compared with successful ones, and they tend to generate a wealth of documentary evidence including speeches, treaties, and briefing memoranda.[2] Despite their value for understanding the origins of Mercosur and the comparative causes of peacemaking among rivals, many of these cases have not been analyzed systematically, and much of the documentation remains unexplored.

This article analyzes one of these failed summits, which is both poorly explained by existing theories of rapprochement and generally overlooked or misinterpreted in the historical literature: Argentine president Alejandro Agustín Lanusse's March 1972 visit to President Emílio Garrastazú Médici's Brazil. From a theoretical standpoint, the lack of cooperation is puzzling, as the Argentine and Brazilian governments faced real threats from leftist insurgent groups (and perceived those threats as greater still), maintained kindred bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, and received normative encouragement from their mutual ally, the United States. A broad consensus among historians of Argentine-Brazilian relations reduces the 1972 failure to the fallout from an ill-chosen remark, a gaffe by President Lanusse involving two phrases seemingly inserted into his dinner toast without vetting by Itamaraty (the Brazilian Foreign Ministry), but these "agency" accounts are methodologically questionable because of their uncritical reliance on participants' later memoirs.[3]

Two sequential issues of the prominent Brazilian newsweekly *Veja* capture the stark contrast between the seemingly favorable environment for international cooperation that preceded the summit and the antagonistic recriminations that followed. Before the trip, *Veja* expressed optimism about its potential. For the March 15 cover story, the editorial page proclaimed "the opportunity for an accord between the two ancient and persistent rivals."[4] The main article recounted

2. On negative cases, see Mahoney and Goertz 2004; see also Ragin 2004, 130–133. Presidential summits meet Mahoney and Goertz's (2004, 654) criterion that negative cases "should be those where the outcome has a real possibility of occurring—not just those where the outcome has a nonzero probability," by indicating a meaningful potential for rapprochement.

3. The first departure called for "the regularization of the use of natural resources to avoid prejudice to other States"; the second claimed that "In our Latin America, where we all are and feel like equals, we understand that we cannot accept eventual oases of prosperity in marginalized zones, be they in national or continental ambit ("... e tudo acabou bem," *Veja*, no. 185, March 22, 1972, p. 14). Translations of all quotations from Spanish and Portuguese, unless otherwise noted, are mine.

4. "Carta ao leitor," *Veja*, no. 184, March 15, 1972, p. 17.

the failures of previous bilateral summits but predicted a "Future of Unity," expecting, "The two presidents know the errors committed by governments of the past and understand the opportunities lost by their peoples. . . . [I]f the future of South America depends on Argentine-Brazilian relations, it can be guaranteed that at least in the coming years this future will not be an exercise in abstract divisions."[5] On March 22, after the failed summit, the magazine could point only to the silver lining that the two countries had avoided turning the offensive verbal "shards" into a war. Had tempers flared,

> Escalation was easy. Brazil would officially respond to the impertinence of the "shards." In turn, the Argentines would refuse to sign any joint communiqué. . . . Itamaraty would recall its ambassador. . . . Troops would be concentrated on the border and, finally, it would never able to be determined how, through fault of an accidental shot, war would begin between the Empire of Brazil and the Viceroyalty of La Plata, an old nineteenth-century dream nourished by amateurs camped on the two sides of the border.[6]

Both sides managed to avoid such escalation, but the drastic deterioration in bilateral relations and the failure of the summit are deeply puzzling.

I offer a revisionist explanation of the 1972 case that is based on new research in the Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina as well as on freshly declassified US government documents and published primary sources.[7] I argue that rivalry persisted despite a host of incentives, including common threat and shared regime type, because economic growth enabled state agencies (especially militaries and foreign ministries) to defend parochially beneficial missions derived from ongoing international conflict. Rivalry tends to build states, and especially the agencies of those states' security and foreign policy apparatus (Thies 2005; Resende-Santos 2007; Centeno 2002). In turn, those agencies acquire parochial incentives (including the defense of budget share, political prestige and policy influence, and organizational autonomy) to undermine presidential cooperation initiatives, despite national incentives for rapprochement.[8] This is not to say that state agencies created rivalry, or that economic prosperity causes them to escalate conflicts or seek out new adversaries, but is rather to suggest that agencies benefit from maintaining an existing rivalry and that a steady stream of state resources enables this continuity.

Although a common threat such as the rise of leftist insurgency could provide a useful alternative mission for those agencies, their willingness to maintain or to jettison the old mission of rivalry depended on economic conditions.

5. "O acôrdo acima de tudo," *Veja*, no. 184, March 15, 1972, p. 27.

6. ". . . e tudo acabou bem," *Veja*, no. 185, March 22, 1972, p. 19.

7. The Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina (hereafter cited as AHCA) has been explored by few researchers, most of whom have focused on the nineteenth century. To my knowledge, only Lanús (1986), Cisneros and Escudé (1998–), and Resende-Santos (2002) cite specific Cold War AHCA documents, and none of these studies cites AHCA documents on Brazil in the early 1970s. Seckinger (1975) remains a valuable introduction.

8. Parochial interest offers a limited, though powerful, explanation of bureaucratic preferences and behavior. An alternative perspective, drawing on the organizational process model (as opposed to bureaucratic politics) in Allison (1971), might emphasize each agency's construction of organizational identity and examine missions as meaningful routines.

Only an economic crisis, placing serious restrictions on state resource availability, would press those agencies to sacrifice their old missions of rivalry in exchange for the new missions defined by counter-subversion, rather than simply maintaining both. In fact, state resource constraints, triggered by oil shocks and debt burdens as the dominant import-substitution development strategy expired, as well as changing organizational preferences in the armed forces, contributed to the successful Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement of 1979–1980 (Oelsner 2005, 66–71; Resende-Santos 2002). Without an alternative mission, economic contraction might well provoke aggressive promotion of existing policies, perhaps even exacerbating rivalry; with an alternative mission, but lacking the policy trade-off pressures caused by state resource constraints, state agencies are likely to accommodate both missions and maximize their parochial benefits, as they did in Argentina and Brazil in 1972. In either case, a parochial interest argument expects state agencies to sabotage presidential rapprochement initiatives. Although this article focuses on the institutional power struggles of bureaucratic authoritarianism in the early 1970s, when military presidents were frequently outmaneuvered by the heads of individual service branches, economic technocrats, and intelligence chiefs, the problem of parochial interest and the obstruction of rapprochement has much wider applicability: even superpowers with a tradition of civilian supremacy over the military have difficulty achieving policy change that threatens organizational interests, as the US learned during the Cold War (Zegart 1999; Feaver 2003; Richter 1992).

This article proceeds in three sections. First, I explain the incentives for Argentine-Brazilian cooperation, demonstrating that three prominent international relations theories would expect rapprochement to have occurred in 1972. I also demonstrate that both regimes counted on plentiful and even increasing sources of state revenues, thus making policy trade-offs and rapprochement less likely, according to my hypothesis. Second, I critique existing historical interpretations of the 1972 summit's failure, and I offer new evidence to support my thesis of bureaucratic sabotage. Using published primary sources, I argue that the gaffe was more a pretext than a provocation; through archival documents, I demonstrate that prior opposition to cooperation in the state apparatus was far stronger than previously acknowledged. Overall, I suggest that no amount of political will, and no degree of precision in public speaking, would have enabled Presidents Lanusse and Médici to achieve rapprochement in 1972. National economic growth had a dark side, which enabled state agencies to take on new missions while defending their existing benefits against presidential encroachment and the threat of a peace dividend. Third, I offer some brief conclusions for the historiography of Argentine-Brazilian relations, the study of Latin American international relations, and theories of rivalry and rapprochement.

A PREDICTABLE FAILURE? INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY IN COLD WAR SOUTH AMERICA

Between the tumultuous border conflicts of the independence era and the more stable competition of the Cold War, the issues in contention between Argen-

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tina and Brazil shifted several times. For example, as allies in the 1860s, the two countries quarreled over the spoils of the Paraguayan War; they nearly intervened on opposite sides of the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay in the 1930s; and they pursued opposing alignment strategies during World War II, with Brazil sending an expeditionary force to fight for the Allies in Italy and Argentina flirting with the Axis and refraining from alignment with the United States until 1945 (Burr 1967; Moniz Bandeira 2003; Frank 1979). Rivalry had important consequences for both countries' state-building trajectories, including the conscious emulation of European powers and the import of military advisers, Argentina's "empty provinces" policy of underdeveloping its northern frontier and especially transportation infrastructure near the Brazilian border, and the increasing prominence of Rio Grande do Sul in Brazilian politics and of the Third Army in the Brazilian military (Resende-Santos 2007; Loveman 1999; Hurrell 1998; Stepan 1971). Although the nature of the issues changed over time, and although presidents repeatedly sought to resolve the disputes, the underlying relationship of conflict and competition persisted, along with the hypothesis of conflict and the possibility of war. Rivalry might seem unsurprising in the late nineteenth century, but its persistence during the Cold War seems much more puzzling.

At the time of the Lanusse-Médici summit, the central issue in Argentine-Brazilian rivalry concerned energy resources. Although the binational race to harness nuclear power drew the most attention outside the region, Argentina and Brazil were preoccupied mainly with their competing hydroelectric projects far upstream in the Cuenca del Plata (see da Rosa 1983, 94–96). The hypothesis of conflict had a concrete outlet here, with Argentine military leaders considering a Brazilian dam as casus belli (Fraga 1998; Balze and Roca 1997, 109; Kacowicz 1998, 80–85). The courtship of neighboring governments took on a new intensity as well, especially Paraguay, whose cooperation was essential for any dam construction because it bordered the river sites favored by Argentine and Brazilian engineers. Technological prowess and economic development took on nationalistic overtones, and a war of words spilled over into heated exchanges at the Organization of American States, the United Nations, and elsewhere. Yet nationalism and rhetoric alone seem unable to explain the persistence of rivalry, as presidents regularly met to seek a new cooperative relationship.

The escalating Cold War provided powerful new domestic and international incentives for Latin American countries to overcome their long-standing rivalries, yet conflicts persisted. Internationally, the United States attempted to build solidarity among its Rio Treaty allies, in part to isolate or overthrow leftist governments in the region, whereas Cuba inspired and supported waves of insurgent groups against right-wing governments (Smith 2008; Child 1980; Castañeda 1993). Domestically, ideological polarization produced political violence and prompted Latin American militaries to sweep aside civilian governments and rule directly (Castañeda 1993; Wickham-Crowley 2001; Valenzuela 1978). Bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes pushed order and progress simultaneously, under "new professional" doctrines of national security, to combine internal operations against leftist insurgencies (latent or actual) with enhanced industrialization (O'Donnell 1979; Stepan 1973). Three hypotheses drawn from international relations theories

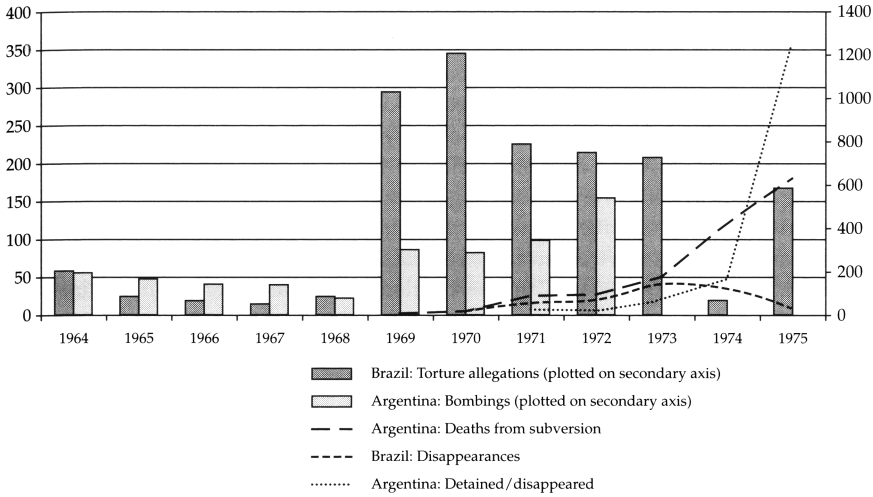

Figure 1 Political Violence in Argentina and Brazil, 1964–1975

Source: Data are from Heinz and Frühling 1999, 72, 81, 647, except for data on Argentine bombings, which are from O'Donnell 1988, 296 (note that 1972 is the last year in O'Donnell's data series).

suggest facets of the common struggle against communism in the Americas that should have led to international cooperation even among historical rivals.

First, the Cold War, and especially the emergence of left-wing insurgencies across Latin America in the wake of the Cuban revolution, provided a concrete common threat. For realist scholars of international relations, balance-of-threat theory holds that common threat generally produces security cooperation and that the proximity and perceived aggressive intent of the adversary enhance threat beyond capabilities alone (Walt 1987; Rock 1989). For developing countries, these threats are often internal rather than interstate, and leaders are more concerned with threats to their regime than with state survival (David 1991; Ayoob 1995). If common threat tends to produce cooperation, then Argentina and Brazil should have reconciled in 1972, when political violence was escalating (see figure 1).

A broad spectrum of Brazilian guerrillas, some trained in Cuba, formed new armed groups in 1967–1968 and launched a campaign of bombings and kidnappings; some forty rebel organizations totaling perhaps six thousand members operated in Brazil by the early 1970s, from urban terrorists in São Paulo to rural *focos* in the Amazon (Skidmore 1988, 117–119; Serbin 2009, 205–208; Alves 1985, 103–119; Quartim 1971, 142–238; Gorender 1999, 153–175). The military responded swiftly, expanding state surveillance authority and selecting General Médici (head of the National Intelligence Service) as president in October 1969 (Fausto 1999, 289–292).[9] State repressive organizations proliferated, as each service branch's intelligence

9. This is not to say that repression was solely reactive—rather, it emerged in many areas before or even without guerrilla activity (Skidmore 1988, 125; Rose 2005, 168; Quartim 1971, 139).

unit developed its own internal security operations, alternately collaborating and competing with local police forces (Stepan 1988; Skidmore 1988, 127–129; Alves 1985, 127–131). As repression expanded, competition developed among the different service branches over which would control domestic operations (including torture): missions produced parochial (and in some cases, venal) interests. In November 1971, Army Minister Orlando Geisel ousted the air force minister and began unraveling the air force's growing torture operations—not to eliminate torture, but to enforce the army's monopoly (Skidmore 1988, 133). Although the urban guerrillas were essentially vanquished by 1972, suppression of a growing rural insurgency (led by Chinese-trained guerrillas) in the Amazonian hinterlands required a two-year campaign with at least twenty thousand troops—"the largest troop mobilization that the army has conducted," according to one of the commanders (Alves 1985, 121; Rose 2005, 179; Gaspari 2002). In addition to the general climate of internal threat, the particular timing is important: the army discovered the Amazonian foco as early as November 1971 and began its counterinsurgency campaign in Pará on April 12, 1972, shortly after the Lanusse-Médici summit (Gorender 1999, 235).

In Argentina, the threat emerged slightly later and became even more acute. The 1966 coup convinced many leftists, whether they followed Karl Marx or Juan Perón, to abandon electoral politics in favor of direct action, and fellow Argentine Ernesto "Che" Guevara's abortive Bolivian insurgent campaign in 1967 inspired the formation of new guerrilla groups (Romero 2004, 189–190). The April 1969 assault on a guard post in Campo de Mayo demonstrated that armed groups had developed serious operational capabilities, and the following month, a general strike in Córdoba "left naked all the short-fallings of the Onganía regime" (Luna 1972, 203; Brennan and Gordillo 1994, 493–494; Gillespie 1989, 187). In 1970, the kidnapping and assassination of former president Pedro Aramburu by the Montoneros presaged a new wave of urban insurgency in which relatively few guerrillas posed (and exposed) serious problems for the government and the armed forces (Camilión 2000, 157). The Aramburu kidnapping was "the last straw": it indicated "that the repressive structure had not managed to reduce the level of danger from the extremist groups," and it spurred the military to replace Onganía with General Levingston less than a week later (Luna 1972, 206; Camilión 2000, 155–156). Further public demonstrations by armed groups led to Levingston's replacement after nine months by General Lanusse (Romero 2004, 192–194). Insurgency and repression increased precipitously over the following few years, peaking in 1978 during the Dirty War; as with Brazil, though, the overall trend of violence tells part of the story, but the specific context of early 1972 is critical. Data in figure 1 from O'Donnell (1988) make this particularly clear, with the number of bombings jumping by more than 50 percent from 1971 to 1972. Just three years later, South American authoritarian regimes began coordinating their repressive activities through Operation Condor (Kornbluh 2004; McSherry 2005); in 1972, however, common threat seems not to have compelled cooperation.

Even if common threat were insufficient to induce cooperation, similar governments might resolve their differences to enhance ideological solidarity, nego-

tiating leverage with third parties and joint problem solving. According to several liberal arguments in international relations, leaders of similar regimes might see one another as pursuing similar goals and facing similar vulnerabilities, and thus refrain from mutual conflict or even form alliances (Owen 1997, 22–43; Walt 1987, 33–40; Russett and Oneal 2001, 235–236). Although most empirical investigations of the pacific effects of regime type and ideology have focused on relations among democracies, there is some evidence that certain types of authoritarian governments have also been able to avoid conflict with one another.[10] Furthermore, an important recent study argues that a low level of "ideological distance" should enable governments to cooperate against a revisionist or revolutionary threat in their region (Haas 2005, 4–18).

Bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes in the era of leftist rebellion ought to fit this model well: military rulers with developmental ambitions facing subversive threats should have been able to push aside their lesser disputes to coordinate against communism. Ideological solidarity, however, seems to explain little of the foreign policy behavior of anticommunist Latin American governments at the time. Lanusse, for example, professed "ideological pluralism," visited several countries including Chile even though "it would have been hard to find a regime more unpalatable to Lanusse's fellow officers than the one headed by [Salvador] Allende," authorized a trade agreement with the Soviet Union and diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China, and even presided over Perón's return from exile (Whitaker 1976, 254). Although two military governments ultimately achieved rapprochement between Argentina and Brazil in 1980, similar regimes did not achieve cooperation in 1972.

Perhaps governments need some third party to call their attention to the magnitude of the common threat, persuade them of their ideological affinity, and prescribe appropriate cooperative behaviors. Several constructivist scholars of international relations emphasize the effects of norms on state behavior and the role of entrepreneurs in disseminating those norms (Klotz 1995, 19–24; Katzenstein 1996, 21; Finnemore 2003, chap. 5; Kacowicz 2005, 28–30). Although much of this research has focused on materially weak nonstate actors such as advocacy networks, most studies (e.g., Keck and Sikkink 1998; Risse 2000) readily admit that power still matters, which implies that not all would-be entrepreneurs are equally effective. Major economic partners and great powers seem particularly well positioned to promote new norms, coercively if necessary (Finnemore 2003, 146–147; Krebs and Jackson 2007; Ikenberry and Kupchan 1990, 285). By the same token, efforts by such states to keep rivals divided and mistrustful are likely to succeed—preferential treatment of Brazil over Argentina by the United States, for example, often undermined the potential for rapprochement (Frank 1979; Moniz Bandeira 2003).

10. See Brown, Lynn-Jones, and Miller (1996) on the democratic peace. Some quantitative studies suggest that pairs of authoritarian regimes do tend to refrain from war with one another more successfully than mixed dyads of one democracy and one authoritarian state, particularly if one disaggregates authoritarianism (Andreski 1980; Peceny, Beer, and Sanchez-Terry 2002).

In the early 1970s, however, the United States encouraged Argentine-Brazilian cooperation to stem the tide of communism in South America.[11] The Nixon administration emphasized regional solidarity against communism, shifting from the Alliance for Progress's dual emphasis on internal security and development to a purer focus on the Cold War, particularly involving covert destabilization of the Allende government.[12] The perceived regional nature of the Chile threat is clear in Henry Kissinger's (1979, 657) memoirs: "His stated goal for over a decade before he became President had been to undermine our position in the entire Western Hemisphere by violence if necessary. Because it was a continental country, Chile's capacity for doing so was greater by far than Cuba's, and Cuba had already posed a substantial challenge."[13] Furthermore, Nixon spoke with and supported both Médici and Lanusse, so there were direct channels for communicating the US vision of regional solidarity.[14] One of the strongest proponents of hemispheric anticommunism, General Vernon Walters, had close personal relations with the Brazilian leaders and served as Nixon's translator during his meeting with Médici.[15] However, US recruitment of South American leaders to a common cause had clear limitations: on September 15, 1970, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms asked Lanusse to help overthrow Allende, but Lanusse replied, "You already have your Vietnam. . . . [D]on't make me have mine" (Weiner 2007, 356–358).[16]

Why, despite so many incentives to cooperate, did rapprochement fail? I argue that state economic prosperity enabled bureaucratic actors to retain their

11. See, e.g., Document 147, Telegram 0769 from the Embassy in Brazil to the Department of State, March 7, 1972, 1345Z, in Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume E-10, Documents on American Republics, 1969–1972, Washington, DC, U.S. Department of State, http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969–76ve10 (hereafter cited as FRUS).

12. As Francis (1988, 29–31) argues, Nixon and Kissinger had little interest in Latin America except when regional events had direct connections to the Cold War or to US domestic politics, and the United States would call the plays when either of those conditions were met; in turn, "The proper role for Latin America would be to cooperate with the initiatives of the hemispheric hegemonic power." Allende's rise was seen as a critical front in the Cold War, and other South American governments clearly received the US message (see Gaspari 2002, 301–306).

13. Kissinger (1979, 683) also accuses Allende of importing Cuban weapons and guerrillas to manufacture insurgency in the region.

14. Document 74, Memorandum for the President's File, Washington, February 7, 1972, "subject: Telephone Conversation with President Alejandro Lanusse of Argentina on Monday, February 7, 1972 at 11:15 a.m.," FRUS; Document 143, Memorandum for the President's File, Washington, December 9, 1971, "subject: Meeting with President Emílio Garrastazú Médici of Brazil on Thursday, December 9, 1971, at 10:00 a.m., in the President's Office, the White House," FRUS. Nixon and Médici spent a great deal of their time identifying individuals who could serve as trusted back channels for private communications.

15. Walters had argued passionately for enhanced military and financial aid to Latin America: "Some day we may want them to do something that we ourselves do not want to do. We must encourage them to cooperate with one another (Police Forces, emergency forces, anti-submarine warfare, etc.). Above all, we must keep alive the idea of a common destiny." Document 30, Memorandum from the Senior Military Attaché in Paris (Walters) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), Washington, November 3, 1970, "subject: Courses in Latin America," FRUS. Nixon's margin notes agree: "This should be our line."

16. The Brazilian side was more enthusiastic about participating in operations against Allende (see Document 143, FRUS).

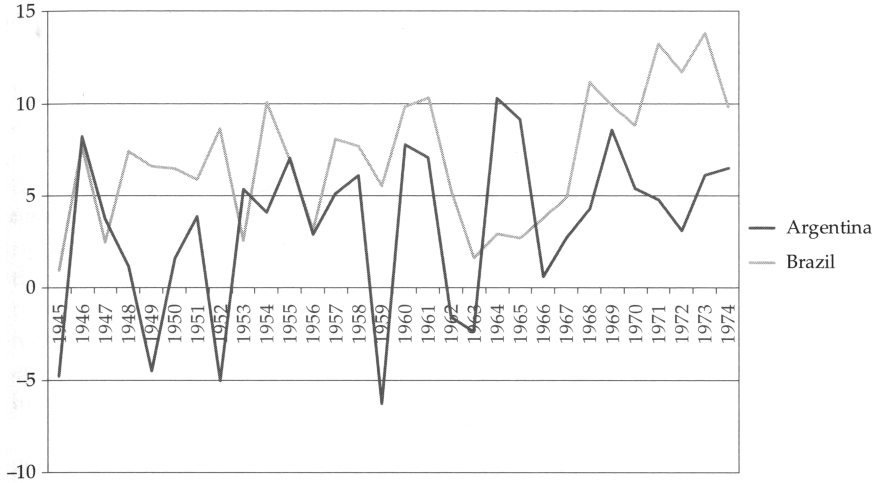

Figure 2 Gross Domestic Product Growth (%), Argentina and Brazil, 1945–1974

Source: Data are from the World Bank World Development Indicators Online.

missions of rivalry even as they absorbed new missions of counter-subversion. Because the peak years of Brazilian counterinsurgency coincided with the so-called Brazilian miracle of high economic growth, which reached double-digit figures annually (see figure 2), they did not generate strong pressures for state agencies to accept conciliation with Argentina. In the early 1970s, the Brazilian military regime could support its great power dreams, pursuing order, progress, and defense simultaneously. The construction of the Trans-Amazonia Highway "exemplified this spirit" while reassuring the military about the prospects for order in the periphery (Fausto 1999, 295; Skidmore 1988, 145–147). Brazil was so flush that it extended foreign aid to Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay, countries where it had long competed with Argentina for regional influence (Whitaker 1976, 254).[17] Annual defense spending also benefited from these boom years, tripling in real terms between 1963 and 1973 (see figure 3). The economic "miracle" should not be overstated: the northeast was left out of industrial expansion, workers faced wage suppression and crackdowns on union activism and political participation, and income inequality actually worsened over the course of the 1960s (Skidmore 1988, 143; Alves 1985, 106–114). Cooperation with Argentina would have been useful to promote development, to combat leftist extremism in the region, and to establish a common front against economic discrimination by the great powers, but it would have been acceptable to Brazil only on Brazilian terms.

Although Brazil was certainly outpacing Argentina, even the Argentine economy was functioning well overall during the period, growing at more than 4 per-

17. Doc. 147, FRUS.

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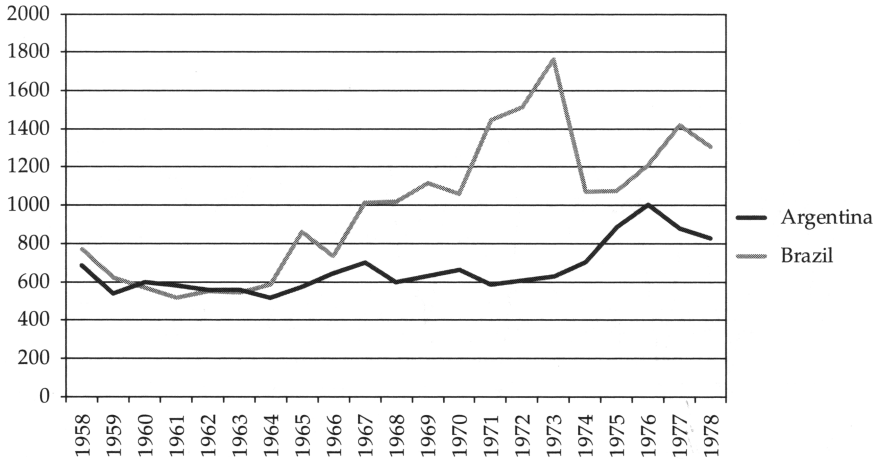

Figure 3 Defense Spending (millions of constant 1973 US dollars), Argentina and Brazil, 1958–1978

Source: Data are from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute 1979.

cent annually, with industrial production increasing about 7 percent annually (Kaufman 1979, 240; Romero 2004, 198–199). In 1972, Argentina was well into its longest postwar period without a recession; although growth rates had fallen over the previous three years, they had remained positive, and they began accelerating again over the final year of the military regime (see figure 2). Argentine manufacturing exports grew 19 percent a year from 1970 to 1975 (although Brazil doubled this rate) (Kaufman 1979, 244). Domestic production of arms and energy further strengthened the state's economic profile (Whitaker 1976, 248–253). Although Argentina was unable to keep pace with Brazil's increases in defense spending, real annual defense budgets did grow by more than 50 percent between 1971 and 1976 (see figure 3).

In his authoritative discussion of the Argentine regime, Guillermo O'Donnell (1988, 264–296) characterizes 1971–1972 as a period of economic crisis, including a decrease in central government tax revenue and increased spending in the interior provinces; however, as in Brazil, the lower classes suffered the major damage, as real wages fell and the price of food and other staple goods rose. Political violence, such as the Cordobazo protest, in part was a reaction to these pressures, and in part exacerbated them by prompting capital flight; however, US loans cushioned the blow (O'Donnell 1988, 264–296), and the Lanusse government must have anticipated that it could ride out a short period of deficit spending given the underlying economic expansion. Thus, I argue that Brazilian and Argentine decision makers were less concerned with the balance of capabilities between the two countries—or the distribution of economic goods in society—than with the ability of their own economy to maintain in absolute terms existing governmental missions and policies.

AN AVOIDABLE RUPTURE? RECONSIDERING DIPLOMATIC HISTORIOGRAPHY

Why did the presidential summit fail to achieve rapprochement? Secondary literature yields surprisingly few references to the 1972 summit, and even fewer explicit interpretations of the sources of failure. The Argentine diplomat Juan Archibaldo Lanús (1986, 2:33) mentions obliquely that Lanusse visited Brazil and that at least one accord was signed, but he makes no reference to the trip's overall failure. Roberto Russell and Juan Gabriel Tokatlián (2003, 38–42) are absolutely right that the relationship between the Brazilian military regime and its Argentine counterparts from 1966 to 1976 was one of continued rivalry and that the turning point arrived only in 1979, "after many comings and goings." My contention in this article is that the comings and goings matter, and that the 1972 episode presents an important lacuna in our understanding of the tortuous path to rapprochement.[18]

Two commonalities emerge from works that do relate the episode. First, they generally emphasize presidential agency, expressed either as the hubris or the accidental mismanagement of Lanusse's diplomacy. Second, they tend to rely rather uncritically on participants' memoirs. Two Brazilian authors of encyclopedic and well-sourced volumes claim that by departing from protocol, Lanusse ruined any prospect for cooperation—however, both refer only to the version of events in the memoir of the Brazilian foreign minister, Mario Gibson Barboza, and to the text of Lanusse's speech in *O Estado de São Paulo* (Barreto 2006, 165; Moniz Bandeira 2003, 415–416). The Argentine authors Andrés Cisneros and Carlos Escudé, in their monumental *Historia General* (1998–, 14: chap. 66), suggest that Lanusse's comments may have been aimed at an audience of domestic nationalists rather than at his Brazilian hosts; their reading relies on *La Nación* and on Lanusse's own memoirs. Although they disagree about Lanusse's intentions, Argentine and Brazilian scholars generally concur that the gaffes reflected his personal agency. This implies a clear counterfactual: had Lanusse remained on script, the summit would have produced bilateral cooperation and perhaps even rapprochement.

I disagree. Instead, I attribute the trip's failure to the continued emphasis by parochially interested bureaucratic and military agencies in each country on increasing their own power and influence at the expense of the national goals sought by presidents. In essence, because both the Argentine and Brazilian economies were performing well from a bureaucratic standpoint (in the Brazilian case, extraordinarily well, at least in terms of gross domestic product growth), state agencies on both sides refused to compromise despite national incentives for cooperation. Lanusse's misstatements make a convenient excuse for the failure of the trip, but state agencies would likely have seized on (or provoked) any number of rhetorical pitfalls to sabotage the presidential rapprochement efforts.

Revisiting the memoirs casts four points of doubt on the agency interpretation. First of all, if the gaffes were an intentional move by Lanusse, either to strike a blow at Brazilian dreams of hegemony or to persuade Argentine nationalists that

18. See Candeas (2005, 212) for a bold first cut at quantifying and visualizing two centuries of advances and retreats in Argentine-Brazilian relations.

he was willing to do so, why did he not take credit for it in one of his several volumes of memoirs? Lanusse devotes just three pages of *Mi testimonio* (1977, 240) to his foreign policy strategy of "ideological pluralism," and he confines the Brazil summit to one sentence; his later books, *Confesiones de un general* (1988) and *Protagonista y testigo* (1994), skip foreign relations altogether.[19] The one sentence we do have conflicts with our only other memoir account: Lanusse claims that the initial proposal for the trip came from Brazilian president Médici, which Barboza clearly disputes.

Second, it appears that the Brazilian foreign ministry was predisposed to maintain rivalry and to mistrust any Argentine overtures. Foreign Minister Mario Gibson Barboza (1992, 110–111), relating the origins of the 1971 Declaration of Asunción, characterized his role in zealous terms: "I saw our diplomacy as a protective shield, behind which a great work would come to pass. It was a true diplomatic war." Furthermore, Barboza (1992, 112–113) states that he and President Médici were opposed to Lanusse's proposal to visit in the first place, reading in the Argentine president's regional activity an effort to encircle Brazil and undermine its hydroelectric projects.

Third, the orchestration of the trip and the setting of the gaffe seem too clever for the statement to have been an accident, but it is hard to credit these moves to Lanusse himself. According to Barboza (1992, 112–113), Brazil was forced to accept the visit once Lanusse announced his intention to inaugurate in Brazil a new statue of José de San Martín. Furthermore, the offending speech occurred in Itamaraty itself (in the new palace in Brasília, which had been completed only two years previously), and Lanusse spoke last, which by protocol precluded Barboza from replying. If the Argentine delegation were intentionally trying to provoke the ire of the Brazilian foreign ministry, this would have been the perfect setting, but the ploy with the statue and the setting of the gaffe seem quite clever moves for an Argentine president who (according to Barboza) blamed the fiasco on his lack of diplomatic skill.[20]

Fourth, it is unclear how exactly Lanusse's remarks scuttled cooperation. In Moniz Bandeira's (2003, 416) version, Lanusse's speech "attacked Brazil . . . in a highly aggressive tone," implying a national offense; in Barreto's (2006, 166) view, the main problem was that it "left Médici irritated" and thus implied a personal insult. However, Barboza's language indicates that the real offense may not have been the content of Lanusse's last-minute additions to his speech, but rather that these violated the control of the foreign ministries over foreign policy—in other words, a bureaucratic problem. Barboza (1992, 113–115) states that the speeches "were reciprocally known, and thus had been discussed, phrase by phrase, word by word, by the chancelleries and embassies of the two countries . . . [with] minute scrutiny," and he asserts, seemingly on behalf of Itamaraty, that Lanusse "added

19. Cisneros and Escudé 1998–, 14: chap. 66, cite this passage but do not provide the context—namely, this short excerpt is essentially Lanusse's only reflection on his foreign policy.

20. Barboza (1992, 116) claims that Lanusse blamed the gaffe on his own ignorance of "these diplomatic things," and that Barboza responded: "Some things are not about diplomacy. They are about ethics."

to his speech, without our knowledge. . . . [I]f we had known beforehand . . . we might even have cancelled the visit. . . . Lanusse surprised us." Similarly, Barboza's stern rebuke of Lanusse's apology sounds more like opposition to rapprochement than dismay over failed negotiations—if a supposedly insulting gaffe had not destroyed the potential for cooperation, then accusing a visiting head of state of an ethical breach certainly would have.

Turning to the speech's context, a collection of published statements by both leaders during the visits reveals two indications that the gaffes were hardly the cause of rapprochement failure, but rather a pretext for it. First, in his session with the Brazilian press, Lanusse made at least two strikes against the supposed spirit of amity and solidarity, either of which could have been seized on by Itamaraty. When asked what he thought of President Nixon's recent remark, "Where Brazil goes, so will the rest of Latin America," Lanusse claimed not to have been aware of the statement, but "with respect to your eventual interpretation I can say that the Argentine government only goes where the sovereign will of the people makes it" (*Entrevista* 1972, 17). Later, when a reporter asked for Lanusse's opinion on whether Brazil would accept the prior-consultation principle in reference to the hydroelectric projects, Lanusse argued that both countries "naturally" had the right to pursue development, but he also stated his "conviction that that development should not be materialized in a way that would harm the interest of another nation or nations," referred to the rivers as "international," and seemed to challenge the Brazilian government to provide information on the possible impact of its hydroelectric projects on Argentina "as a clear and unequivocal expression of an authentic bilateral cooperation" (*Entrevista* 1972, 19). Given these statements, the "offensive" inserts to Lanusse's speech no longer seem either accidental or off message. Either Lanusse had received woefully inadequate preparation for the trip—which is unlikely given that it was an official presidential visit to Argentina's main rival and that Lanusse was accompanied by his foreign minister—or provocation was part of the plan.

Second, departures from cooperative themes were not limited to the Argentine delegation. In his prepared speech, Médici constantly emphasized national sovereignty, which in the context of the summit is a clear allusion to the Brazilian position on the hydroelectric projects (i.e., that river resources can be exploited by the country in whose territory they lie, irrespective of problems this might cause for countries downstream). Also, questions from the Brazilian press seemed eager to entrap Lanusse as anti-Brazilian. One wonders whether these questions, which had been prepared in advance, had been preauthorized by Itamaraty, as had the other texts during the visit: the Brazilian and Argentine foreign ministries had almost legendarily hand-in-glove relations with the press, thus making it easy to interpret several questions as having been carefully selected as weapons in a diplomatic war. In one of the starkest examples, Lanusse faced a three-part query: whether he accepted the thesis that Latin American militaries focused on internal threats because of an absence of external ones, how he would justify recent Argentine purchases of airplanes and naval ships, and whether in addition to its current tank program Argentina planned to develop other arms programs

(*Entrevista* 1972, 18–19).[21] It would be difficult for any president to survive a series of such encounters without giving offense, and with it, the pretext to abandon rapprochement.

Published primary sources offer a valuable corrective to the evasions and recriminations that often crop up in memoirs and echo in secondary literature, but a positive case for a revisionist interpretation of rapprochement failure should go further. Internal government documents from the archives, if they can be obtained, often provide starker assessments (and should be considered, ceteris paribus, more authoritative evidence) of preferences and expectations, because they were not intended for public consumption (Moravcsik 1998, 81–82). A declassified telegram from the US ambassador to Brazil William Rountree a week before the summit, for example, expresses pessimism about the potential for rapprochement. Although "it is clearly in US interest that Brazil and Argentina should play as effective a role as possible in supporting maintenance of Bordaberry and Banzer governments in Uruguay and Bolivia, and it is also desirable that they should if possible cooperate in such efforts," Rountree saw prospects for cooperation as weak: "Most serious problem is Brazilian-Argentine relationship itself. While fundamental relationship is better than it used to be, and relations between military and police leaders are quite good . . . Lanusse personally is disliked and distrusted by Brazilian leadership, and his visit viewed as an unavoidable distasteful necessity by both Presidency and Itamaraty. . . . [W]e seriously doubt that this would be the forum to kick off genuine cooperation."[22]

Documents from the United States also reveal information about Brazilian and Argentine intentions. Médici brought up the disputed hydroelectric projects with Nixon, explaining that "his greatest difficulty would be with the Argentines. He said that he intended to speak very frankly to President Lanusse when he came to Brazil. He would speak not as President to President but as General to General."[23] Médici's general-to-general approach seems to underscore the security dimension and the importance of solidarity against communism; although this quote does not necessarily imply confidence that the two leaders would be able to achieve rapprochement, it does suggest tolerance and even encouragement for unvarnished, blunt communications—hardly the attitude of a man who would be dissuaded from negotiations by a gaffe. Similarly, Lanusse explained to Nixon that his planned trip to China "was in line with the philosophy of the Argentine Government of breaking down ideological barriers"—international rapprochement was clearly Lanusse's central theme in foreign policy.[24]

My research in the Archivo Histórico de la Cancillería Argentina provides four additional observations that support my interpretation of bureaucratic sabotage as against the dominant interpretation of presidential agency.[25] First, documents in the

21. Rather diplomatically for someone who (according to Barboza, 1992, 116) had pled ignorance of things diplomatic, Lanusse declined to answer this question as "not pertinent."

22. Doc. 147, FRUS.

23. Doc. 143, FRUS.

24. Doc. 74, FRUS.

25. The AHCA is divided into thematic *fondos* (also called *cuerpos* or *series*). I restricted my investigation to fondo 47, "América del Sur, 1950–1985" (there is not a separate Brazil series), which contains

months preceding the trip exhibit pessimism over Brazilian intentions and the prospects for cooperation. On February 2, the director of policy of the Ministry of Public Works complained at length about Itamaraty's "very reticent and particularly obstructionist" attitude and its having "accentuated its traditional stall tactic," and he concluded with respect to the upcoming presidential visit that "apparently few possibilities exist for arriving at spectacular accords with Brazil at this moment in the area of hydro resources," although a couple of limited joint declarations reaffirming prior agreements might be possible.[26] More important, I did not encounter a single document that anticipated a major diplomatic breakthrough for the summit—if an unforeseen gaffe had actually torpedoed cooperation, expectations of rapprochement ought to have figured prominently in the records preceding the visit.

Second, the Argentine Foreign Ministry appears more pro-rivalry than other agencies. One month before the summit, the director of the National Commission on Atomic Energy expressed his desire for a nuclear accord with Brazil, "an interest that has been manifested for several years, but which political reasons determined by the [Foreign] Ministry has postponed to the present." What political reasons were these? Over 1970 and 1971, the Foreign Ministry had explained that an accord should be delayed "until the general conditions of our relations with that country were more favorable, reserving that accord as an element of negotiation, given the interest demonstrated by Brazil."[27]

Third, the archives reveal multiple proposals for using the trip to maintain, rather than to overcome, rivalry with Brazil. A memorandum for the foreign minister from the head of the Latin America Department, Hugo Boatti Osorio, concludes:

> Towards the goal of capitalizing on the favorable position that has been obtained, it seems opportune to arrive at a direct confrontation with Brazil in the area in which it is possible to obtain the greatest advantages. . . . [I]t would not be inconvenient to follow through with the upcoming meeting of the Foreign Ministers and even a Presidential visit to Brazil on the occasion of inaugurating the monument to San Martín. Such meetings should not exceed their strictly formal significance, avoiding any appearance of alliance. *If such a policy were to fail, one could always provoke a bilateral confrontation* or the dispute could be referred to the meeting of the Group of Experts scheduled for October, reserving the meeting of the Intergovernmental Coordinating Committee for later negotiations.[28]

Nor does this appear to be an isolated sentiment. Writing to at least two cabinet secretaries, Rear Admiral Carlos Francisco Peralta, subsecretary of security, with

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388 boxes (*cajas*) stored in numbered pairs (*bultos*, or packages, in this series usually contain two boxes). Water damage and security classification precluded access to several of these.

26. Ing. Luis Perez Aguirre, Director Nacional de Política y Asuntos Técnicos [illegible], Ministerio de Obras y Servicios Públicos, al Sr. Director del Departamento America Latina, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, Ministro D. Enrique Ros, Expediente 12372/71-T, Nota No. 325 (cover letter and attached memorandum), February 2, 1972, bundle 91, box "Brasil Parte No. 1," black binder, "Viaje Presidencial Lanusse," pink folder (untitled), fondo 47, "América del Sur, 1950–1985," AHCA.

27. Oscar Quihillalt, Presidente, Comisión Nacional de Energia Atómica, al Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, February 16, 1972, bundle 91, box "Brasil Parte No. 1," black binder, "Viaje Presidencial Lanusse," pink folder (untitled), fondo 47, AHCA.

28. "Relaciones con Brasil: Estrategia a Corto Plazo." Hugo Boatti Osorio, Jefe, Departamento América Latina, to S.E. el Canciller, July 15, 1971, pp. 17–18, bundle 52, box "Brasil Notas 1980 Nicanor Costa Mendez 1982," black binder (untitled), fondo 47, AHCA. Emphasis added.

the Secretariat of the National Security Council, argued that the trip should be used primarily as an opportunity to outmaneuver the Brazilians and that "if the conversations do not have the result that is sought, the joint communiqué could be anodyne enough to demonstrate this. Brazil being the country that made the invitation, a show of this nature would reveal that it has been Itamaraty and not Argentina who has failed."[29] State agencies not only expected rapprochement not to occur but also actually intended to prevent it.

Can these bureaucratic preferences be connected to the actual triggering incident, Lanusse's gaffes? Ideally, archival research would uncover a draft of the speech, with the offending textual inserts handwritten in the margin, dated and initialed. The documentary record, at least on the Argentine side, does not yet afford such a smoking gun, but it does enable us to reconstruct over the weeks and days before the summit Argentine diplomats' abundant awareness of Brazilian sensitivity to departures from protocol and agreed-on texts. Osorio had reported to Foreign Minister de Pablo Pardo several of Brazilian ambassador Azeredo da Silveira's objections to recent Argentine diplomatic gestures, including, "The surprising presentation of the hydroelectricity document in the Meeting of Cuenca del Plata Experts in Brasília, when the other documents had been passed on to him," which "was seeming to depart from the manifested intention of avoiding sterile discussions in the multilateral arena and progressing toward a common accord in the development of the Multinational Program."[30]

Cables from Argentine diplomats in Brazil to Buenos Aires in the days immediately before the visit also reflect clear awareness of Brazilian insistence on specific textual foreknowledge. On March 11, Undersecretary José María Ruda reported on the previous night's negotiations with the Brazilian delegation, noting that "serious differences are encountered in relation to natural resources and the Environment." Ruda's further analysis bears distinct parallels with the eventual gaffe:

> The undersigned sustained a long one-on-one conversation after the meetings, on this issue with Chancellor Gibson Barboza, who expressed to me that "in the Abstract" there can be Brazilian opposition to mentioning "international law," but that the question would be analyzed at the highest Brazilian level with eyes on the Water issue in the Cuenca that is to say with political criterion, in accord with the moment. In such circumstances, it is not possible—he added—to accept a primitive proposal. I manifested surprise that in the area of natural resources and the environment general international law would not govern relations between the two countries. Gibson proposed to avoid problems eliminating the whole paragraph. I answered saying that I would consult. It appears premature to present formulas with divergent positions of the two parties.[31]

29. "Informe de la Subsecretaria de Seguridad: Objetivo, Políticas y Estrategia Para la Visita del Primer Magistrado a Brasil," undated (cover letters are dated February 2 and 3, 1972), bundle 91, box "Brasil Parte No. 1," black binder, "Viaje Presidencial Lanusse," pink folder (untitled), fondo 47, AHCA.

30. Hugo Boatti Osorio to S.E. el Canciller, July 26, 1971, "Conversación con el Embajador Azeredo da Silveira," bundle 52, box "Brasil Notas 1980 Nicanor Costa Mendez 1982," black binder (untitled), fondo 47, AHCA.

31. Cable No. 7–8-9–10-11–12-13 from Argentine Embassy Section in Brasília, sent by Nereo Melo Ferrer (signed by José María Ruda) to Argentine Foreign Ministry, March 11, 1972, bundle 44, box "Colombia 1963 Brasil 1972 Notas," binder "Año 1972, Brasil Cables," fondo 47, AHCA.

Later that day, Counselor Nereo Melo Ferrer, head of the Argentine embassy's Brasília section, sent an urgent cable that Itamaraty requested a Portuguese version of Lanusse's speech, frankly admitting, "I will proceed to effect a translation, but given the responsibility that this implies, I ask whether there already exists a version in that language."[32] These documents do not definitively demonstrate that the gaffes were intentional, but they do raise the stakes—senior Argentine diplomats, acting in good faith, should have known exactly how Brazil would see any departure from the script and should have briefed Lanusse accordingly. Alternatively, these exchanges may indicate Brazilian diplomats preparing the groundwork for an eventual complaint: by explicitly warning the Argentines about protocol, Brazil would be able to select almost any departure as grounds to scuttle rapprochement.

HISTORY, BUREAUCRACY, AND PEACEMAKING

The joint declaration signed by Lanusse and Médici emphasizes three principles: "that comprehension [and] mutual respect are the necessary bases of a firm and indissoluble friendship"; that there is a "contribution that falls to Argentina and Brazil in the solution of the problems of international peace and security and, in particular, of those that affect Latin America"; and "that solidarity should be the constant and permanent guide in their state-to-state relations" (*Entrevista* 1972, 25–26). Thin protestations of friendship, however, could not conceal the absence of any agreement on the fundamental hydroelectric dispute or the complete stall in prospects for rapprochement. The summit's breakdown is hard to reconcile with the conventional interpretation of a gaffe, whether accidental or malicious, by President Lanusse; instead, the vested interests of foreign ministries and armed forces in perpetuating rivalry, enabled by economic expansion and clearly visible in the preparations for the trip, offer a more persuasive explanation for rapprochement failure.

This analysis of a negative case offers lessons beyond clarifying the events of March 1972 in Brasília. For the historiography of Argentine-Brazilian relations, it advocates an enhanced emphasis on intragovernmental politics and a renewed exploration of additional negative cases: obstacles and antecedents demonstrate just how impressive and difficult the present era of strategic alliance and economic integration was to achieve. For the study of Latin American international relations more generally, it argues for increased archival research and for triangulation across multiple countries' published records and bodies of research. The natural development of national diplomatic historiographies, and the prominent place of leaders' memoirs in these literatures, should be challenged and enriched with contradictory interpretations and irreducible contemporary documents.

Finally, for the study of international rapprochement, it suggests that persistent rivalry may have less to do with hatred and nationalism, material threat, or regime incompatibility than with organizational politics. Nor is lack of political

32. Cable No. 17 from Brasília, March 11, 1972, bundle 44, box "Colombia 1963 Brasil 1972 Notas," binder "Año 1972, Brasil Cables," fondo 47, AHCA.

will or presidential diplomatic finesse necessarily the problem; rather, structural economic conditions, filtered through the self-interested agencies of the state apparatus, can make rapprochement exceedingly difficult even when states have incentives to cooperate. Like many other aspiring peacemakers, Lanusse and Médici fell victim to the obstructionism of spoilers, a problem well documented in civil war research that deserves further investigation in the context of international rivalries (Darnton 2011; Pearlman 2008–2009; Stedman 1997). Bestowing a medal on his Argentine counterpart Luis Maria de Pablo Pardo the day after the gaffes, Brazilian foreign minister Mario Gibson Barboza cryptically proclaimed, "No man of responsibility in government can ignore the great historical and geographical affinities existing between Brazil and Argentina, under penalty of not having conditions to exercise his charge."[33] The converse may reveal a more apt lesson: leaders unable to control their administrations may be unable to achieve international cooperation and therefore might be wise to refrain from risky international overtures until they have obtained the clear support of their own governments.

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33. ". . . e tudo acabou bem," *Veja,* no. 185, March 22, 1972, p. 19.

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