

Thus while Argentina can obviously not claim the historical or great power past of Great Britain, it would be a mistake to think of the country as in any way lacking international experience of wide scope. In the confidence-building area, Argentina shares much with the rest of Latin America. Many elements of what would now be called confidence building infused the relations of the country with the region as a whole. The tradition of a *patria grande*, more than just a hold over of the Liberator Simon Bolivar's dream of a united Latin America able to withstand the pressures of the European great powers and the United States, but with real elements of a Latin American commonwealth, has reinforced the tradition of confidence in the region.

While the actual behaviour of Latin American states where major interests are involved does not appear to reflect this sentiment very strongly, the ignoring of this sense of belonging to a larger body of linked nations leads to a distortion of one's understanding of the international politics of this part of the world. And while it is possible for excellent Latin American scholars such as Francisco Rojas Aravena to assert that Latin America is a region of great cooperation but great distrust, it is still true that in most cases the relations of these countries have historically not shown the same degree of tension as in most regions of the world. This is reflected in the region's relatively low levels of militarization as a whole but even more dramatically in the relative infrequency of interstate wars there.

Confidence building should of course flourish in such circumstances, as theorists have pointed out. And indeed it has with the results just mentioned. And while a number of disputes and even conflicts persist, there can be no doubt that Latin America still appears to be a favoured region in this sense when compared with most of the world.

Argentina has in recent decades, however, not been able to claim to be at the forefront of such favourable circumstances, and has only in the past few years made great progress in settling some of its major disputes with neighbours and rivals. The rivalry with Brazil intensified in the 1940s and seemed likely to remain a thorn in regional peace efforts for long afterwards. Relations with Chile were never really good with border and insular questions in the south quite capable of bringing the two countries to the brink of war. Loss of influence in Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia grated on Buenos Aires as well.

Nor were regional problems alone in making Argentina's international relations problematical. Antarctica brought nationalist governments in Buenos Aires into conflict with several states. The Falklands issue itself meant relations with Britain were never entirely without frictions. And Argentina's long-term opposition to what it saw as US pretensions in Latin America never entirely disappeared from the agenda of the country's international relations. It must also be said that the foreign policy of the country was often seen as rather erratic, despite its firm traditions, this being a reflection of its extraordinary and long-lasting political and economic crisis dating from the 1930s and only ending in very recent years indeed. The Peronist movement and the exceptional nationalism that prevailed in some military regimes over those decades produced twists and turns in foreign policy which at various times alienated the United States, Britain and Europe, Latin America, and the Third World. Confusion at home showed up, not surprisingly, as confusion on the