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Public Diplomacy and International Conflict Resolution: A Cautionary Case from Cold War South America

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Can public diplomacy help resolve protracted international conflicts? Both rationalist and constructivist traditions identify significant domestic obstacles to international peacemaking. However, Robert Putnam's concept of "reverberation" implies that diplomats can expand their adversaries' win-sets for cooperation by engaging foreign publics. This paper analyzes a most-likely case, with archival evidence: Argentine Ambassador Oscar Camilión's unsuccessful quest for Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement in 1976–77. Although the two countries later overcame rivalry, public diplomacy contributed negligibly to this success: internal Argentine divisions created mixed messages toward Brazil, Brazilian leaders launched a competing public relations operation, and these two currents obstructed and nearly terminated Camilión's mission. This case illuminates the paradoxes of Argentine foreign policymaking under military rule and offers a cautionary tale for scholars and practitioners of public diplomacy and conflict resolution.

Can public diplomacy resolve international conflicts and, if so, under what conditions? How stable and significant are the preferences of domestic political actors as an obstacle to international cooperation, and how amenable are they to persuasion and mobilization? From rationalist arguments emphasizing costly signals to constructivist ones privileging symbolic gestures and reconciliation, international relations theories maintain that conflict resolution between rival countries requires diplomatic engagement to break the ice. Scholars have focused on such outreach primarily in state-to-state or leader-to-leader terms (Armstrong 1993; Kydd 2005; Kupchan 2010; Nincic 2011).¹ However, to the extent that protracted conflicts are driven by perceptions, identity, ideology, anger, or mistrust (Haas 2005; Hassner 2009; Hopf 2012; Hall 2015), official diplomatic outreach to the opposing citizenry might be able to alter conflict outcomes by changing minds, whether through propaganda and persuasion aimed at concessions or by opening political space for conflict resolution (see Pratkanis 2009; Mor 2012). And if conflicts are rooted in the opposing interests of dominant domestic groups, then two-level bargaining models

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¹ A specialized literature on "Track Two" or citizen-to-citizen diplomacy largely bypasses the state, with mixed results (Kaye 2007; Fisher 2005).

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(Schelling 1960, 19, 24–28, 202; Putnam 1988, 438–41, 444, 450–52) suggest that engagement with foreign publics could expand an opponent's win-set (spectrum of politically acceptable negotiated outcomes) and enable cooperation. In short, public diplomacy offers a mechanism for achieving foreign policy breakthroughs and conflict resolution but one that has not yet been either theoretically articulated or empirically tested.

The first section of this paper elaborates the theoretical interface between public diplomacy and conflict resolution, defines core concepts, and outlines potential channels of diplomatic influence. Subsequent sections frame, analyze, and draw conclusions from a most-likely case: Argentine Ambassador Oscar Camilión's efforts to build domestic support within Brazil for a peaceful resolution of the Argentine-Brazilian rivalry after the Argentine military coup of March 1976 and before formal negotiations with Brazil commenced in September 1977 over the protracted hydroelectric dispute that was the core issue in their regional rivalry.

This should have been fertile ground for a public diplomat. A strategic rivalry between regional powers with similar regimes, ideologies, and alliance portfolios, and without an indivisible territorial dispute or recent bloodshed that could inflame nationalist passions and empower hardliners, provided powerful structural incentives to overcome rivalry and an opportunity for creative diplomacy to tip the scales for peacemaking. Moreover, rivalry was in fact overcome by the decade's end, and Camilión (2000, 203–4, 208, 221) later claimed credit for his public diplomacy in resolving the conflict, presenting an opportunity for process tracing in a seemingly successful case. Camilión's memoirs (2000) have become a standard source for scholars of Argentine-Brazilian relations during the Cold War, but the recent publication of several important oral history interviews with Camilión's Brazilian counterparts allows researchers to cross-check his accounts. Additionally, I present new declassified evidence from the Argentine Foreign Ministry archives, including correspondence between Camilión and his superiors in Buenos Aires.²

These documents reveal that despite an apparently promising environment, Camilión's efforts failed to produce state-to-state negotiations, let alone rapprochement, and, on at least two occasions, nearly cost him his job. I argue that public diplomacy failed not because the target (Brazilian) population was unreceptive but rather because political divisions within the home (Argentine) government created inconsistent messages and because Brazil eventually mobilized a public opinion counteroffensive. This case offers sobering grounds on which to rethink the domestic politics of international conflict resolution and the conditions for successful public diplomacy.

Furthermore, unpacking Camilión's predicament through primary sources helps to illuminate the paradoxes of foreign policy and national security decision-making under Argentine military rule. Known as the Process of National Reorganization (the *Proceso*, for short), the 1976–83 Argentine junta was vehemently anti-Communist yet traded with the Soviet Union and fought the Jimmy Carter administration's human rights agenda. The regime was authoritarian but riven by interservice rivalries. It promoted neoliberal economic reforms to shrink the state, even as the state's repressive apparatus proliferated. It cooperated enthusiastically with neighboring right-wing dictatorships against shared leftist enemies through Operation Condor, and it ultimately achieved rapprochement with Brazil in 1980. However, ideology proved no barrier to violent conflict, as the 1978 standoff with Chile over the Beagle Channel and the disastrous 1982 war with Britain over the Falklands/Malvinas demonstrate. Overall, Argentine foreign policy making under

² These archives are relatively untapped, particularly for the Cold War period (exceptions include Resende-Santos 2002; Darnton 2014, chapter 3); scholars frequently analyze Argentine-Brazilian relations through memoirs and interviews (Oelsner 2005) or Brazilian archives (Moniz Bandeira 2003; Cervo 2001).

the Proceso is one of the great puzzles in international security both within and beyond the Americas.³

Conflict Ripeness and the Diplomacy of Icebreaking

Public diplomacy consists of efforts by elements of one state's foreign policy apparatus to engage another country's population rather than its government. Although societal outreach may have once been dismissed as "low politics" or vilified as propaganda (and in either case, as beneath the dignity of professional diplomats), it is increasingly seen as a vital foreign policy tool. According to the US State Department, "The mission of American public diplomacy is to support the achievement of U.S. foreign policy goals and objectives, advance national interests, and enhance national security by informing and influencing foreign publics and by expanding and strengthening the relationship between the people and Government of the United States and citizens of the rest of the world" ([State Department 2018](#)). Practitioners and contemporary US foreign policy concerns have dominated the writing on public diplomacy, and the subject is struggling to find an academic home (see [Gregory 2008](#)). Scholarly studies of public diplomacy have primarily focused on the United States and other Western industrialized countries' diffuse efforts regarding branding and image-building among foreign populations ([Chiozza 2009](#); [Goldsmith and Horiuchi 2009](#); [Hayden 2012](#); [Hart 2013](#)), usually emphasizing "soft power" ([Nye 2004](#)) and increasingly examining nongovernmental actors as foreign affairs protagonists, rather than states' more focused lobbying initiatives to build support within the target country for specific policies (cf. [Nye 2004](#), 105–8; what Nancy [Snow \[2009, 6\]](#) calls "traditional" public diplomacy).⁴ This specialization is unfortunate because public diplomacy, both as a foreign policy practice and as a research program, has much to offer the field of conflict resolution and because contemporary interstate conflicts often involve developing countries with different diplomatic traditions and objectives.

In particular, public diplomacy might help counteract two sources of pessimism about the prospects for international peace and cooperation: domestic interests and state identities. In rationalist traditions, both sides of debates over domestic vetoes, audience costs, and foreign policy generally assume fixed, exogenously given preferences for each actor ([Fearon 1994](#); [Snyder and Borghard 2011](#)). The consequences for international cooperation are stark, as Helen [Milner \(1997, 241, 251\)](#) explains: "actors' interests are primordial," and as such, "the assumption of polyarchy"—that is, that multiple domestic actors share power and can influence or veto foreign policies—"never makes cooperation more likely than it is in the anarchic game between two unitary states. The addition of domestic politics has negative consequences for international cooperation." However, if preferences are sometimes endogenous to interaction ([Gerber and Jackson 1993](#)), then public diplomacy might be able to build domestic support within the target country for measures such as dispute resolution or economic integration. Therefore, domestic political dynamics might sometimes enhance, rather than obstruct, the likelihood of international cooperation.

In constructivist approaches, as well, much hinges on how leaders and peoples actually change one another's identities, narratives, role prescriptions ([Malici and Walker 2017](#)), and perceptions and whether they can do so intentionally, strategically, as entrepreneurs ([Keck and Sikkink 1998](#); [Finnemore 2003](#)) or whether, as Alexander Wendt argued ([1999, 277–78](#)), states can be tightly locked into a cultural

³Excellent English-language introductions include [Romero 2004](#); [Feitlowitz 1998](#). On relations with Brazil and Chile, see [Resende-Santos 2002](#); [Oelsner 2005](#). On relations with the United States, see [Schmidli 2013](#); [Sheinin 2006](#), chapter Six. On Operation Condor, see [McSherry 2005](#); [Kornbluh 2004](#). On Falklands/Malvinas, see [Welch 2002](#); [Levy and Vakili 1992](#).

⁴Work on ethnic lobbies ([Mearsheimer and Walt 2007](#); [de la Garza and Pachon 2000](#)) offers a partial exception.

or normative structure of Hobbesian conflict. Whether scholars view public diplomats as lobbyists trying to shift the preferences of a rational interlocutor (or his or her constituents) or as entrepreneurs seeking to transform the beliefs and desires of a socially embedded neighbor, diplomats' ability to reshape international interactions through creative individual agency deserves new research (Copeland 2009; Sharp 2009).

Two points from conflict resolution studies are particularly relevant for understanding these diplomatic predicaments: ripeness and engagement. First, for rival countries to resolve their disputes and develop a new cooperative framework, they need to negotiate with each other, but first they have to agree to come to the table at all, which can be the most difficult step (Cohen 1997, 45; Limbert 2009, 179, 193). Extensive scholarship emphasizes the structural factors underpinning "ripe moments" for conflict resolution attempts, including economic and military crises, policy failures, and compatible governing regimes in both countries (Rock 1989; Haass 1990). Much of this is driven by costs: as states acquire information about their worsening circumstances, they search for mutual rather than unilateral advantage. Thus, prenegotiation can help to minimize risk and cost, share information, and set the agenda.

Second, when ripeness has almost but not quite emerged, there is a powerful opportunity for individual agency to finish the job. Structural forces have indeterminate effects; leaders choose whether to react to crises with escalation or de-escalation, and their domestic and personal concerns influence those choices (Lebow 1997, 158, 163–74). Skillful leaders interested in negotiated conflict resolution have several communicative tools, from exploiting personal relationships to creatively framing grand bargains (or, conversely, fractionating issues), to sending costly signals and making symbolic gestures that demonstrate their cooperative objectives (Armstrong 1993; Long and Brecke 2003; Kydd 2005; Kupchan 2010). Paradigmatic examples include Richard Nixon's visit to China, Anwar Sadat's to Israel, and West German Chancellor Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik. Even more powerful than signals or symbols to correct misperceptions, or framing to alter payoffs, leaders may be able to transform the other country's interests and preferences (Nincic 2011). These efforts are politically fraught for national leaders, so the vital preliminary tasks of reaching out to a suspicious rival, establishing the possibility of negotiations, and setting the agenda often fall to envoys. Ambassadors face the enormous political cross-pressures of having to satisfy both the home government and the host one, playing "two-level games" (Putnam 1988, 433), in which success may have more to do with structural conditions than with diplomatic skill, but tactical missteps might still scuttle the enterprise. Public diplomacy might be an attractive approach for these aspiring peacemakers.

Robert Putnam's (1988, 435–37) two-level games model depicts the difficulty an envoy faces in seeking an international agreement that is acceptable both to his or her foreign counterpart (Level I) and to a domestic audience back home (Level II, which Putnam primarily illustrates with congressional ratification of a previously negotiated treaty, although he recognizes that diplomats often have to play both games simultaneously rather than sequentially). Putnam (1988, 437) defines a "win-set" as "the set of all possible Level I agreements that would . . . gain the necessary majority among the [Level II] constituents—when simply voted up or down." Whereas a larger win-set increases the probability of reaching a cooperative agreement at Level I, a smaller win-set increases bargaining leverage and makes it more likely that if a Level I agreement is reached, it will align closely with one's core preferences. For a country attempting to build interstate cooperation, it is advantageous for the other side to have as large a win-set as possible. This is where public diplomacy comes in.

To bridge the unfortunate divide between international relations research on conflict resolution and on public diplomacy, analysts should revive Robert Putnam's concept of *reverberation*. As Putnam (1988, 454) observed, "governments do

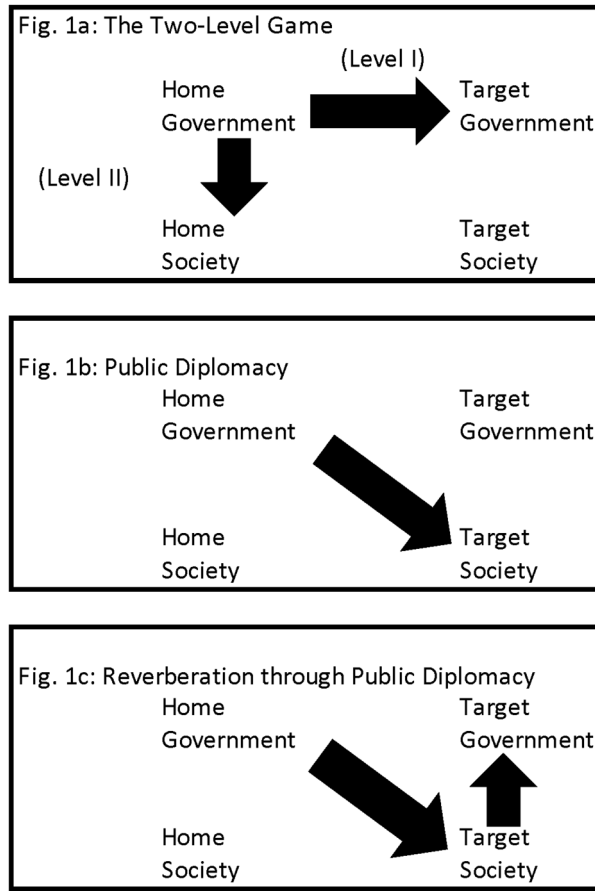


Figure 1 Influence and diplomacy in two-level games.

Note: Depicts narrative descriptions of two-level games (Putnam 1988: 435–437), public diplomacy (Nye 2004: 105–108; Snow 2009: 6–8), and reverberation (Putnam 1988: 454–455).

seek to expand one another's win-sets. Much ambassadorial activity" involves "seeking to relax domestic constraints that might otherwise prevent the administration from cooperating with their governments." Public diplomacy is perfectly suited to this kind of outreach: engaging and conciliating the foreign public to build a pro-cooperation coalition expands the adversary's win-set (Copeland 2009, 163). Not all public diplomacy efforts necessarily seek reverberation—they might achieve national goals strictly by working with, within, or against foreign societal actors, rather than by leveraging those actors' relations with their own government. Reverberation, however, is a particularly important subset of public diplomacy, in which a state uses societal allies abroad to bring their government to the table or to empower that government to make particular concessions. (Figure 1 depicts the two-level game, public diplomacy, and reverberation.) Reverberation can also be thought of as the inverse of Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink's (1998, 12–13) boomerang model of transnational activism. Both models involve coordination between Home Government and Target Society (in the terms of Figure 1) to press Target Government for concessions but with the direction of influence reversed: activists in Target Society recruit Home Government (via the activists' connections in Home Society) to put "boomerang" pressure on Target Government.

Reverberation received scholarly attention in studies of interstate negotiations shortly after Putnam's article (Odell 1993; Snyder 1993). The most sustained analysis of this strategy demonstrates that it was an enduring hallmark of Soviet prenegotiation behavior on arms control (Griffiths 1989). Importantly for conflict resolution, reverberation was a critical component of Sadat's concessions toward Israel and the successful negotiation of the Camp David accords (Stein 1993) and was later tantalizingly suggested as a possible source of rivalry termination elsewhere (Hensel 1999). However, it has largely (and unfortunately) vanished as a research agenda, even though the international relations discipline would seem well positioned to revive it. After all, the two-level games concept is now canonical in studies of trade negotiations (Milner 1997; Silva 2007; Fernández de Castro and Leycegui 2015), and even political realists increasingly take a "neoclassical" approach incorporating domestic political pressures and constraints on decisionmakers (Rose 1998; Ripsman et al. 2016).

Reverberation, and two-level games more broadly, involves several dilemmas and paradoxes—for instance, just as leaders have incentives to expand their opponent's win-set by building a pro-cooperation coalition within the opponent's country, they also have incentives to reduce their own win-set by undermining pro-cooperation coalitions at home. This creates potential contradictions in foreign and domestic policy, and inconsistencies or weak popular support can undermine policy effectiveness (see Copeland 2009, 167). And international threats to build domestic support, signal preferences, and reduce one's win-set invite reciprocity, create dangerous spirals, and undermine the potential for negotiated compromises (unless such threats raise the opponent's relative costs of not negotiating, or induce a third party to intervene) (Mares 2001). Studies of public diplomacy and conflict resolution have much to offer one another, by exploring the practice and unintended consequences of reverberation.

The Puzzling Intractability of Argentine-Brazilian Rivalry

Can public diplomacy, through reverberation, help resolve international conflict? More concretely, among the population of protracted interstate rivalries, where might outreach to foreign publics succeed? Ideally, a public diplomat would like a situation of stasis that is open to creativity, where structural factors suggest a ripe climate but where hostility is not so severe that it calls for excessive heroism. Least-likely cases include territorial disputes, particularly those over sacred space; conflicts with recent or severe bloodshed, which lead to hostile identities, trauma, or narratives of victimhood; and mutual misperceptions (see Leng 2000; Hassner 2009). In such circumstances, unreciprocated cooperation can be politically fatal (Colaresi 2004) and apologies can lead to blowback at home (Lind 2008). Relatively nonviolent rivalries, particularly positional strategic rivalries (Colaresi, Rasler, and Thompson 2007) offer a set of most-likely cases. Regime type and alliance portfolio also affect the likelihood of cooperation: where a totalitarian North Korea, allied with China, faces off against a US-allied, democratic South Korea, public diplomacy faces tall odds. Similar regimes with a shared great power ally, however, offer more promising terrain for peacebuilding.

The relationship between Argentina and Brazil in 1976–77 met all of these criteria. If public diplomacy can help resolve interstate conflicts, it should have succeeded there. First, in contrast to neighboring rivalries, like those of Ecuador and Peru, Bolivia and Chile, or Argentina and Chile, the Argentine-Brazilian rivalry focused on nonterritorial issues and had not endured a military clash for generations. In the mid-1970s, the most sensitive dispute involved competing hydroelectric power projects on the Paraná River and its tributaries: Brazil was constructing a dam with Paraguay on their shared border, which would affect the availability of water downstream and potentially endanger the viability of Argentina's proposed

dam along its own border with Paraguay. Although the hydroelectric dispute provided the main focus for debate and for the negotiations leading to rapprochement in 1979–80, Argentina and Brazil also competed in several other domains: for US favor, for regional influence and leadership, for military readiness under what their armed forces called the “hypothesis of conflict,” and for technological superiority and prestige regarding nuclear energy (Darnton 2014, chapter 3). As a result, the technical disagreements over turbines, dam heights, and the international legal treatment of waterways took on highly political significance and stood in for an underlying relationship of strategic rivalry. However, none of these issues was indivisible or sacred; all were in principle negotiable and amenable to diplomatic overtures.

Second, the two governments had several common features and interests. Both Argentina (after the 1976 coup) and Brazil were changing several policies to correct a pattern of failures, which should have contributed to ripeness for conflict resolution. The Argentine junta set its central objectives as correcting civilian errors, ranging from economic crisis to political polarization to open insurgency. And in Brazil, the military regime initiated foreign policy shifts and domestic political “decompression” after the October 1973 oil shock, in recognition of cracks in the so-called “Brazilian miracle” of authoritarian development. Moreover, the two regimes had similar ideologies with respect to the Cold War and had a number of subregional cooperative and communications channels open, from the River Plate Basin diplomatic summits after 1968 to the military and intelligence network of Operation Condor after 1974. Economic downturn, debt, and inflation by the decade’s end surely contributed to ripeness and rapprochement (Resende-Santos 2002; Oelsner 2005). And costs may have pushed Brazil to change its negotiating stance even before this, with Brazil’s failure to coerce Argentina and to reward Paraguay sufficiently, such that a unilateral approach bore significant opportunity costs relative to regional negotiation (Soares de Lima 1986). However, the inability of both parties to agree to negotiate for nearly a year and a half after the Argentine coup, despite all of these incentives, needs further explanation.

Finally, public diplomacy was actually attempted, and rivalry was eventually overcome, making this case particularly important for Latin American diplomatic history as well as offering a valuable and apparently positive case for theory testing. Resolution of the hydroelectric dispute in October 1979 paved the way for decades of political cooperation, economic integration, and strategic alliance. However, reaching an accord and even getting to the table took years of surprisingly difficult and protracted diplomatic wrangling. These delays are particularly surprising because the protagonists were two anti-Communist military regimes with several common interests, including countering the perceived threat of leftist subversion. Initial Argentine overtures to Brazil failed, and the road to the 1979 rapprochement featured intermittent stalemate and backsliding. Argentine Ambassador Oscar Camilión’s strategy of public diplomacy to outflank the obstructionist bureaucracy and engage potential supporters of Argentine-Brazilian cooperation unintentionally mobilized opposition in the foreign ministries of both countries and nearly led to his dismissal. If structural factors incentivized cooperation, and if motivated agents tried to tip the scales further in that direction, why did prenegotiations drag out for over a year (to say nothing of the two years of negotiations that followed)? Why are some cooperative gestures self-defeating?

The Perils of Public Diplomacy: Camilión in Brasília

The Argentine junta that took power on March 24, 1976, faced two acute problems in foreign policy: the hydroelectric conflict with Brazil and a territorial dispute with Chile. To deal with Brazil, the junta appointed Oscar Camilión (a journalist and former diplomat who had pushed for Argentine-Brazilian cooperation in the early

1960s) as ambassador. In his memoirs, Camilión recalls receiving “quadruple offer,” since the heads of each military service and the chief of the Higher Joint Staff separately asked him to take up the post in Brasília; “It was a kind of message” that the military wanted the hydroelectric dispute resolved, telling him “in the most categorical manner: ‘You will have total freedom of action. You will determine the policy to follow in Brazil so that Argentina obtains a reasonable solution to the problem of the rivers’” (2000, 190).⁵ Camilión sought to “overcome all the anachronistic inheritances of the past,” recognizing “no contradiction between the execution and fulfillment of the principal national objectives of Brazil and the principal objectives of Argentina” (2000, 197). Thus, Camilión explained, “my strategy upon taking charge of the embassy” was to “replant the Argentine-Brazilian relationship in the sense of the total advantage of an organic friendship between the countries” (2000, 197). In short, Camilión set out to forge a rapprochement and believed he had the domestic backing to do so.

However, other accounts suggest that Camilión’s mandate was less ironclad. One of the few books drawing on interviews with Argentina’s president, General Jorge Videla, explains that he personally selected key ambassadors, while the Navy commander appointed an admiral, César Guzzetti, as foreign minister (Seoane and Muleiro 2001, 242). And an account using Brazilian Foreign Minister Azeredo da Silveira’s oral history and personal archive relates that Camilión’s nomination involved Videla holding a meeting “unprecedented in the annals of Argentine diplomacy” with three ex-foreign ministers (notably, *not* his current foreign minister, Guzzetti) and Camilión May 12, 1976, to work out a road to cooperation with Brazil, and the Foreign Ministry sent Camilión’s nomination to Brazil’s Ministry of Foreign Relations the following day (Spektor 2001, 161). This apparently established a dual mandate in foreign policy toward Brazil. Camilión politely recalls that Guzzetti and his successor (yet another admiral), Oscar Antonio Montes, “did not create obstacles, but neither were they an engine in favor” of cooperation (Camilión 2000, 216). However, one review of Silveira’s oral history suggests a lingering suspicion that Camilión “did not have the unrestricted support of Buenos Aires” (because an ambassador, in Silveira’s own words, “does not have his own judgment. He follows instructions”) and concludes that the Brazilians essentially misperceived how much authority Camilión really had (Spektor 2001, 163). A key problem for Camilión’s initiatives would be not simply building Brazilian support for rapprochement but securing the unified support of his own government.

Scholars know a good deal about the gap between Argentine and Brazilian positions circa 1976 and about Camilión’s efforts to bridge this through public diplomacy and reverberation. Brazil, and particularly Silveira, maintained that there was no dispute to resolve (while working to build its hydroelectric dam as a *fait accompli*) (Moniz Bandeira 2003, 423–24). Brazilian President Geisel related in an oral history interview that he extensively delegated foreign policy decision-making to Silveira, who handled relations with Argentina (the hydroelectric dispute takes up just two of Geisel’s 464 pages of interview transcripts) (D’Araujo and Castro 1997, 346–47, 359; Spektor 2010, 303–4). Silveira’s June 1976 farewell remarks to Camilión’s departing predecessor indicate Brazil’s position: the countries were expanding their commerce more than ever, so surely the bilateral relationship, already strong, would only improve (Resenha 1977a, 146). In contrast, *Jornal do Brasil* reported on the eve of Camilión’s arrival that he “defends a more direct understanding with the Brazilian Government,” especially on the hydroelectric issue (July 2, 1976, 2).

Facing a unified Brazilian governmental refusal to negotiate, Camilión spearheaded an Argentine effort to outflank the Brazilian Foreign Ministry’s obstructionism and boost domestic support in Brazil for cooperation with Argentina—in other words, to use reverberation to expand Brazil’s win-set (Camilión 2000, 196, 200,

⁵ My translation (as are all Spanish- or Portuguese-language sources except where noted).

215). This struck Silveira as exceedingly unprofessional, since “in diplomacy it is precisely that which is not noticed that matters. Effectiveness has to be achieved without the excessive notoriety of the ambassador’s activities” (quoted in [Spektor 2001](#), 163). The contest between Camilión and Silveira became an “intense battle in the area of communications media,” a “battle for public opinion” that escalated in 1977 and involved Silveira replacing his press advisor in order to match Camilión’s tactics ([Camilión 2000](#), 198, 203). The replacement advisor, future foreign minister Luiz Felipe Palmeira Lampreia, recalled that Camilión’s willingness and ability to “work the Brazilian press” (primarily female reporters, Lampreia observed) was “driving Silveira crazy” ([Lampreia 2010](#), 79). According to Camilión, the episode “is studied as a special case study” by the Brazilian Foreign Ministry and has been considered “the most difficult negotiation that Brazil made in the twentieth century” (2000, 204). Did Camilión’s public diplomacy actually create a constituency for cooperation and expand Brazilian leaders’ win-set and why or why not?

What has not yet been clarified, and what new archival research can demonstrate, are the differences in position and worldview among Argentine decisionmakers and what impact these had on the ability of public diplomacy to achieve formal negotiations (i.e., Level I talks, in Putnam’s model). Argentine Foreign Ministry records from June and July 1976 reveal clearly divergent perspectives between Camilión and his superiors in Buenos Aires, not only regarding what each hoped to achieve with Brazil but also what they meant by a global view of the bilateral relationship. For the Foreign Ministry, the ultimate goal was to achieve particular Argentine interests on disputed issues; to achieve this, negotiations with Brazil were necessary, and to maximize negotiating leverage and get Brazil to the table, limited cooperative overtures would be tactically useful. Thus, in June, the head of the Argentine Foreign Ministry’s Latin America Department recommended “reformulating our political strategy toward the neighboring country, not from a strictly bilateral standpoint, but from a global perspective, in the belief that everything that is executed from a universal-regional level will directly influence the Argentine-Brazilian connection” ([AHCA 1976a](#)). Thus, limited outreach to Brazil on less-conflictual issues would be instrumental: “The creation of a climate of confidence in Argentine-Brazilian relations or at least, not of generalized controversy, could make itself viable through joint treatment of issues that do not present greater difficulties, within the complex of matters to negotiate simultaneously and globally” ([AHCA 1976a](#)). Camilión’s appointment would help maximize Argentine interests: “The designation of a new Ambassador in Brasília opens a new negotiating stage,” although it is “necessary that our country first define with clarity its objectives in order to strengthen its negotiating capacity,” while pursuing “the immediate objective of improving the current position of weakness . . . in which our country finds itself in relation to Brazil”; thus, having “[d]iscarded a policy of confrontation, limiting and counter-productive for our bilateral interests and for our global diplomatic action . . . a new dialogue” might be useful, “without giving up in the defense of our fundamental national interests” ([AHCA 1976a](#)).

However, Camilión’s first major report from Brasília emphasized friendship, conversation, and engagement, rather than negotiation. Camilión noted that the bilateral relationship had tremendous press and that “in practically unanimous form, the tone of this material has been positive and in many cases, directly friendly.” As expected, Silveira, when Camilión presented his credentials, was “very cordial in personal terms but eluded in careful manner any reference either to issues between Brazil and Argentina or even to bilateral relations” ([AHCA 1976b](#)). Camilión proceeded indirectly, which would characterize his operations for years, asking Silveira “about some things related to organizational aspects of” the Foreign Ministry, “an old vocation of the chancellor—and subsequently I shifted the conversation to the Argentine situation, over whose favorable evolution he expressed courteous hope” ([AHCA 1976b](#)).

Camilión's eagerness for cooperation, and readiness to detect Brazilian reciprocity, are clear in his discussion of meeting President Geisel. Because Geisel's "austere condition . . . is known, as is his scarce propensity to exaggerations," "the evident decision to emphasize the ceremony and to give it prestige should be noted as a political act" (AHCA 1976b). Geisel "was very cordial" and "expressed in clear form his objective of closer relations with Argentina . . . He was clear also in the mention of those who work to create obstacles in the bilateral relationship and very direct in the suggestion that he would see it directly each time that it was needed" (AHCA 1976b). Camilión outlined the "proposals of the Argentine government relative to the relations with Brazil" and underlined "the great national priority that in these moments the fight against subversion represents," to which Geisel "expressed his hope in a swift victory against terrorism and violence" (AHCA 1976b). The overall "climate of cordiality has been promoted, in the first place, by President Geisel himself and the [Foreign Ministry] has not dissented," either in person or in the press, although "the basic attitude of the Brazilians is that of expectancy" (emphasis in original), due to perceptions that Argentina had not been a valid interlocutor and concerns "that the Argentine government could try to 'manufacture' a conflict with Brazil as a diversion operation, given our internal difficulties" (AHCA 1976b). Thus, Camilión planned to promote "a positive attitude that will improve the climate, reestablish confidence, win adepts in the influential social circles, and neutralize the spokesmen of extreme positions, in particular those who have access to the press" (AHCA 1976b). He concluded that cooperation required "an objective and frank appreciation of the global reality of Argentina and Brazil, not always summed up within the viewpoint of their respective [foreign ministries]" (AHCA 1976b).

Camilión and his superiors began with divergent assumptions, which boded poorly for effective diplomacy. A global perspective, for the Foreign Ministry, meant considering several linked issues, including some outside the bilateral relationship, to address through comprehensive negotiations. For Camilión, a global perspective meant transcending the foreign ministries, engaging the press and public opinion, and emphasizing a holistic bilateral relationship rather than a negotiated push for national advantage. As a result, when Camilión's public diplomacy offended the Brazilian government, contributed to mixed messages about Argentine positions, or simply attracted intense press coverage, he needed to justify his activities—and his continued employment—to Buenos Aires. Only three days after Camilión's triumphant July 13 report, he delivered an obsequious and defensive (if not actually chastened) letter to Foreign Minister Guzzetti, explaining that his press conference "was equivalent to a sort of mortal leap over a narrow net. The meeting was incisive and full of dangerous questions"; moreover, Camilión says he was often misquoted (the examples, if accurate, would certainly have upset the Argentine junta), but the press overall acted in "good faith" and as a "positive and constructive stimulus . . . on which the first course of our management can in good measure depend" (AHCA 1976c). Presumably this smoothed things over, since Camilión kept his job and even sought to expand his public outreach beyond the capital, informing Brazil's Foreign Ministry of his "special interest" in officially visiting Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo in August (AHCA 1976d). However, the diplomatic impasse continued until two-level tensions erupted more forcefully the following year.

Meanwhile, in late 1976, the primary locus of prenegotiations shifted to the ministerial and presidential levels, toward formal Level I channels rather than public diplomacy. Videla telegraphed Geisel in August as a goodwill gesture, surprising the Brazilian Foreign Ministry and giving a new impulse to bilateral conversations (*Memoria* 1976, 32; *Resenha* 1977b, 114). An apparent sign of progress came in December, with the River Plate Basin countries' foreign ministers' meeting in Brasília, at which Guzzetti and Silveira got along well (*Resenha* 1977c, 37–60;

Memoria 1976, 32). Two major documents from mid-1977 recall this as a high point of prenegotiations that subsequently collapsed. A memorandum on Brazil policy by the new head of the Argentine Foreign Ministry's Latin America Department briefly noted Camilión's arrival in Brazil but suggested that the foreign ministries authored the major diplomatic achievements of 1976; the December meeting in particular "laid the 'bases' to handle the existing problems with a new 'tone,' identifying themes of common interest that would universalize the connection and would avoid the particularized analysis of the pending issues" ((emphasis in original), *AHCA* n.d. a). Similarly, Foreign Minister Oscar Montes (who replaced Guzzetti in May 1977 after the latter was grievously wounded in an assassination attempt [*Camilión* 2000, 188]) reported to Videla that at the December meeting, "the bases of a new understanding between Argentina and Brazil were laid," and when the chancellors met "for the first time, the acceptance that problems existed regarding the exploitation of shared rivers was achieved, and it was agreed that it was necessary to overcome these through negotiated formulas," which produced "a new climate . . . more propitious for the search for a concerted solution" (*AHCA* 1977a).

Meanwhile, the Carter administration, inaugurated January 1977, unintentionally catalyzed Argentine-Brazilian coordination by pressuring both countries over human rights abuses and nuclear programs; in March, Brazil canceled its military accords with the United States, symbolically rupturing a partnership dating to World War Two (*Resenha* 1978a, 93, 113; *Veja* 1977a). Camilión declared Argentine support for Brazil's nuclear ambitions, exploiting the breach with the United States to promote Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement; however, he did so without instructions from Buenos Aires and was nearly fired (*Camilión* 2000, 202–3). Presidential and ministerial efforts continued: in March 1977, Argentina proposed trilateral negotiations (Brazil did not respond immediately, although Paraguay approved), and in April Geisel and Videla met separately with Paraguayan dictator Alfredo Stroessner to discuss hydroelectric issues (*Memoria* 1977, 40, 42, *Jornal do Brasil*, April 12, 1977).

However, these overtures did not resolve the Argentine-Brazilian impasse, and Argentine decisionmakers grew increasingly frustrated. One Foreign Ministry report criticized Brazil's "attitude of systematic intransigence," by which "the expectations" built by the December meeting were "gradually defrauded by a series of gestures or acts seemed intent on bringing the relationship back to levels more negative even than those reached since 1973"; Brazil apparently employed "a truly dilatory policy intended to dissemble the real objective: presenting consummated and irreversible deeds" through its dam construction (*AHCA* n.d. a). Likewise, Foreign Minister Montes observed that when Camilión sought an answer to the March note proposing trilateral talks, Silveira "showed himself opposed to trinational negotiations" and suggested only "secret bilateral conversations" but without explaining what these would entail (*AHCA* 1977a).

If presidential and ministerial encounters could not deliver negotiations, then Argentine-Brazilian relations were back to where they had been when Camilión was appointed a year earlier. Once again, he must have found public diplomacy attractive (despite setbacks in July 1976 and February 1977), since the Brazilian government seemed willing to yield the stage. In May, Geisel echoed Silveira's traditional stance that media outreach leads people to "to confuse publicity with negotiations" (quoted by *Spektor* 2001, 163). Within the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, the attitude was that "diplomacy is not made with floodlights" (*Lampreia* 2010, 81). (For Camilión, of course, floodlights were the key to suasive reverberation and ultimately rapprochement.)

Two further press scandals—both involving leaks leading to mutual recriminations—apparently changed Silveira's mind. First, Silveira's infamous May "secret speech" to Brazil's Senate Committee on Foreign Relations blamed Argentina for the lack of negotiation. The speech was hardly secret, since Silveira's

testimony was announced in advance and summarized in detail (and briefly quoted) in the next day's papers (*Jornal do Brasil*, May 17, 1977, 5; May 18, 1977, 3). The speech's release produced mixed congressional reactions (*Resenha* 1978b, 93–94) and newspaper editorials critical of Silveira, creating pressures (including among military leaders) for Geisel to fire him. The Argentine Foreign Ministry expressed “the displeasure of our government” concerning the speech, both via Camilión in Brasília and to the Brazilian ambassador in Buenos Aires (*AHCA* 1977a). Second, in July, leaked Argentine-Brazilian communiqués in a Brazilian paper caused the Argentine Foreign Ministry to protest, deny responsibility, and warn that such an “anomalous act . . . should be analyzed with great thoroughness to avoid situations that lend themselves to any mal-intentioned interpretation . . . [T]exts of this nature should be published by common accord” (*AHCA* 1977b).

After this, Brazil's Foreign Ministry openly entered the lists, counteracting Camilión's reverberation efforts with its own societal outreach to line up public support for the Brazilian government's existing position, essentially minimizing its win-set to strengthen its negotiating position with Argentina. In July, Silveira switched press advisors and strategies (*Jornal do Brasil*, July 12, 1977, 3). The new spokesman, Luiz Felipe Lampreia, recalls that Silveira gave him “carte-blanche” to emulate and defeat Camilión; Lampreia decided that “what was essential . . . was to do what Camilión was doing, that is to say, it was to give information, it was even to expose oneself, it was to reason with the press, it was to try to capture them, right?” (*Lampreia* 2010, 79). Thus, two of Silveira's deputies, future foreign ministers Lampreia and Ramiro Saraiva Guerreiro, argue in oral histories that Silveira defeated Camilión by adopting his tactics (*Guerreiro* 2010, 259–63; *Lampreia* 2010, 78–85).

With the press campaigns at an impasse, both governments lurched toward negotiations. The standoff symbolically peaked with the July 27 publication of Brazil's leading newsweekly, *Veja*—the cover depicted Argentine and Brazilian flags, moving in opposite directions with giant arrows in the national colors. The headline, “Argentina-Brazil: The Disagreement” (*o desencontro* more literally means “the failure to meet”) led to a cover story, “The Tough Search for Peace,” which concluded a decades-long summary of the bilateral dispute and of contemporary accusations and frustrations by wryly observing, “At least in relation to one point, Brazilians and Argentines firmly agree—the necessity of keeping the channels of understanding open so that the ‘instrumental differences’ . . . are not converted into an undesirable political confrontation” (*Veja* 1977b). Silveira announced that Argentina would respond to a Brazilian note seeking negotiations, although Brazil maintained several preconditions (*Jornal do Brasil*, July 28, 1977, 14); the following day, Argentina proposed technical conversations on the hydroelectric dams (*Resenha* 1978c, 155). Camilión returned from Buenos Aires and, amazingly, offered no comment on the “reinitiation” of dialogue beyond calling it “extremely constructive” (*Jornal do Brasil*, August 1, 2). Lampreia announced that after Chancellors Silveira and Montes exchanged notes (through Brazil's embassy in Argentina), tripartite talks (including Paraguay) would occur, although the format, level, and preconditions had not been determined (*Jornal do Brasil*, August 2, 1977, 4). The Level I diplomatic channels, though frustratingly gradual and technical, seemed to bear more fruit than the mobilization of societal opinion through public diplomacy.

The following week involved claims of victory and new risks of defeat. First, both diplomats managed to declare success and save face. Lampreia confirmed that tripartite negotiations were a Brazilian proposal that Argentina had accepted (*Jornal do Brasil*, August 3, 1977, 1, 4). However, because Argentina had proposed trilateral talks in May and Brazil rejected them, Camilión declared that Brazil's decision to include Paraguay was a “positive attitude” and that Argentina had “always considered a tripartite reunion valid” (*Jornal do Brasil*, August 4, 1977, 2). However, another batch of communiqués between Montes and Silveira appeared in the press, followed by Argentine accusations and Brazilian denials (*Jornal do Brasil*, August 6,

1977, 1, 12–13, August 10, 1977, 2; [Lampreia 2010](#), 79). Finally, on August 26, Brazil formally accepted Argentina's proposal for technical tripartite conversations to begin in September in Paraguay ([Resenha 1987c](#), 155).

Again, archival records between May and July 1977 suggest ongoing divisions among Argentine worldviews that complicated policymaking toward Brazil and undermined Camilión's efforts to build a Brazilian constituency for rapprochement. In particular, Foreign Minister Montes' discussion of motivations for Argentina's outreach to Brazil differed markedly from Camilión's understanding. Where Montes had seen openness and concessions as tactical, to undermine Brazilian resistance to negotiations, using cooperative gestures to pave the way for accords conforming to Argentine positions, Camilión believed that Argentina's goal was cooperation itself—that is, rapprochement. In June, Montes told Videla that Argentina's "attitude, inclined toward dialogue and concord, helps place the Brazilian authorities in an uncomfortable situation against their public opinion and other sectors of power of that country, more favorable to the understanding with Argentina" ([AHCA 1977a](#)). Regarding Silveira's speech, Argentina tried "to facilitate the adjustment of Brazilian foreign policy, without trying for the possible 'containment' of [Silveira] and his eventual removal, or adopting a policy of hardening that would make the return to constructive channels difficult" ([AHCA 1977a](#)). In contrast, Montes claimed that Silveira used "intransigent external postures to consolidate his personal situation," probably trying to push Argentina to adopt "a hard-line or confrontational position, which would justify the non-realization of negotiations"; reciprocally, "the constructive and firm attitude maintained by Argentina . . . weakens the position of [Silveira] against his public opinion and other sectors of power" ([AHCA 1977a](#)).

Camilión, however, still believed public diplomacy and reverberation were essential to resolving the dispute with Brazil. Since the 1976 coup, Camilión argued to Montes, "Argentina attempted . . . to replant its relationship with Brazil," to "giv[e] those relations a positive character" since "the confrontation with Brazil did not respond to any national interest" and was "sterile" and "based on anachronistic criteria of regional supremacy" ([AHCA 1977c](#)). A paramount goal was "gaining allies in [Brazil] for the cause of an understanding with Argentina"; Camilión claimed that his "veritable strategy of indirect rapprochement" involved "an intense diplomatic action to appreciate the value of Argentina . . . and to persuade Brazil—beginning with groups of decisive influence—of the necessity of establishing a globally positive connection with our country" ([AHCA 1977c](#)). Public diplomacy was useful because "Usually countries understand one another through their social summits, and they mistrust one another in their bases. Between Argentines and Brazilians the opposite more truly occurs," whereas at the government level Brazil's Foreign Ministry "(at least Silveira) does not have interest in a global cooperative action with Argentina" ([AHCA 1977c](#)).

As tensions peaked in July, Camilión's objectives still varied starkly from those of the Argentine Foreign Ministry, with the former emphasizing the overall relationship and the latter seeking relative advantage. Camilión reported that the Brazilian military was uncomfortable with Silveira's and the Foreign Ministry's stonewalling Argentina and that "a high chief who occupies a charge of great weight in the military circles expressed to me his serious preoccupation with the state of the bilateral relationship. He directly put the responsibility on [the Foreign Ministry] for the state of things . . . Shortly, he added, 'heads will roll' . . . there is no-one in the Armed Forces who wants anything but a good and growing positive relationship with Argentina" ([AHCA 1977d](#)).

In contrast, the head of the Argentine Foreign Ministry's Brazil Division argued that a transportation dispute, though minor compared to the hydroelectric issue, was politically important as an "indicator of the firmness with which the country is capable of confronting other negotiations—over transcendental issues" (emphasis in original) with Chile and Brazil, which sought "advantage from the eventual

disagreements” among Argentine decisionmakers; Argentina should “offer thus a united front to the task that, in inverse sense, the Embassies of those countries develop” (AHCA 1977e). Although the transportation issue hurt Argentine trade in the short run, “other negotiations . . . over which the image of firmness will reverberate—jeopardize the national economy (and even sovereignty over its own resources) with a significance much greater than that” (AHCA 1977e). Conversely, press attacks on Silveira gave “an advantage in favor of Argentina that it should not fail to take advantage of,” while any economic risks to Argentina “award an interesting margin of negotiation against the current damages that Brazil suffers” (emphasis in original; AHCA 1977e). An internal report after bilateral transportation talks in August reiterated this perspective, calling the meeting “a lucky trial by fire for the negotiating capacity of both countries on the important issues”; reaching minor compromises on technical issues showed “that the will (especially Argentine) was to demonstrate the possibility of reaching satisfactory accords for both parties” on more important matters (AHCA n.d. b).

Although Camilión’s efforts contributed to bilateral dialogue toward official negotiations, this hardly signaled the end of rivalry. Tripartite talks began September 1977 in Paraguay (Resenha 1978d, 135). However, negotiated resolution of the hydroelectric dispute, like getting to the table initially, required two tortuous years of backsliding, accusations of bad faith, and standoffs. The Argentine Foreign Ministry’s annual report for 1977 struggled to offer a positive interpretation of the year’s bilateral events, claiming as accomplishments only “the continuation of dialogue . . . communication . . . [and] the information necessary to understand better the technical aspects of the respective projects” (Memoria 1977, 27). The following year’s summary (Memoria 1978, 23) begins with a terse sentence: “As in 1977.”

Moreover, the contribution of public diplomacy to even this limited shift is dubious. Camilión’s efforts were undermined by his superiors in Argentina and eventually put in check by their Brazilian counterparts. Although Camilión recalled that in 1977 a Brazilian diplomat told him over a game of golf that “You’ve just won the battle of the press,” this should hardly be taken as definitive (2001, 203). Ironically, Camilión, who had tried to improve relations rather than drive hard bargains, nearly fell victim to a goodwill gesture himself: Montes’ successor as Argentine Foreign Minister in 1978, Carlos Washington Pastor, offered Silveira Camilión’s head (according to Silveira: Spektor 2010, 247). Both Camilión and Silveira, who entered their positions intending to resolve the dispute for their own reasons, were unable to do so (Lampreia 2010).⁶ The hydroelectric treaty was signed by Silveira’s successor, Ramiro Saraiva Guerreiro, and by Washington Pastor, who had largely sidelined Camilión.

Reverberation Revisited

During his mission in Brazil from 1976 to 1981, Argentine Ambassador Oscar Camilión faced a series of ironic dilemmas. He felt his assignment was to deliver rapprochement, but the Argentine Foreign Ministry really wanted only limited cooperation with Brazil in order to gain leverage for competition in other areas. He tried to resolve disputes with Brazil over hydroelectric power, but the Brazilian Foreign Ministry refused to admit that there was anything to negotiate (a negotiating tactic in itself). And given bureaucratic resistance, he chose a public diplomacy strategy, appealing to the Brazilian public for support for a more cooperative bilateral relationship, but he nearly lost his job several times over scandals in the press. Camilión sought what Robert Putnam (1988, 455) calls “suasive reverberation,” mobilizing domestic societal pressure within Brazil to expand Brazil’s win-set for conflict

⁶ Lampreia suggests that Camilión sought the Argentine presidency and Silveira wanted a feather in his diplomatic cap.

resolution with his home country of Argentina. However, this reverberation failed to materialize, and the conflict was later resolved through other channels.

How should researchers assess Camilión's impact on Brazilian opinion, and on specific governmental and societal actors?⁷ Ultimately, Camilión's goal of bilateral rapprochement was achieved, and he subsequently served as Argentine foreign minister. However, the Brazilian allies he identified—particularly the armed forces and the general public—seemed already sympathetic to his cause (and responsive to evolving domestic and international circumstances), rather than yielding to his persuasion. Camilión's cables were determinedly optimistic, and his diplomatic outreach was omnivorous (military and civilian, societal and governmental), but his strategy and progress reports remained opaque on leveraging specific engagements for actors' policy support. Because archival sources and memoirs are purposive documents (George and Bennett 2005, 101–8) that serve their authors' interests, frequently claiming personal success and redirecting blame, scholars might expect public diplomats to take credit swiftly when any channels of influence bear fruit. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence (for instance, future work should examine Brazilian archives), so some caution attends these findings, but Argentine records of Ambassador Camilión's first eighteen months in Brasília yield surprisingly little process-tracing indication of suasive reverberation. Camilión kept dialogue alive and deserves remembrance as an ardent promoter of Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement. However, he encountered great difficulty moving the levers of public diplomacy.

This case suggests three main findings, and attendant directions for future research, about the conditions under which diplomats can appeal successfully to foreign publics to build a constituency for peace and cooperation. First, intragovernmental divisions complicate diplomatic signaling and the construction of overlapping win-sets essential for international cooperation, even among authoritarian states. Building on studies of institutional variation within authoritarian regimes and their resulting conflict behavior (Weeks 2014) scholars might examine how those features affect bargaining, diplomacy, and peacemaking. Silveira's secret testimony in May 1977 "affirmed that the greatest difficulty for resolving the impasse on the Rio Paraná is Argentina deciding definitively what it wants" (*Jornal do Brasil*, May 18, 1977, 2). This was an old canard, and Camilión and his superiors found it outdated and offensive; Montes wrote to Videla that such allegations "create a false and inconvenient image of duality with respect to [Argentine] position" and "favor the non-negotiating will of Brazil" (AHCA 1977a). However, Silveira's accusation had some truth to it: different Argentine foreign policy actors knew what they wanted but wanted different things. Power struggles between Argentine military branches impacted the autonomy and direction of the civilian bureaucracy including the Foreign Ministry, which the press and foreign governments observed; these conditions proved perilous for public diplomacy. Brazil accurately recognized these Argentine schisms; in other Cold War relationships, though, such mixed signals could be misperceived as vacillation, hard bargaining, or irrationality. For instance, US leaders often saw anything but lockstep compliance by Latin American governments as a warning sign of communism, whereas greater attention to Latin American intragovernmental divisions and domestic politics could have been mutually beneficial. Relatedly, although Latin American leaders were often acutely aware of US domestic dynamics, Washington may not have appreciated how much its bureaucratic and executive-legislative divisions broadcast mixed signals across the Americas.

Second, future work on public diplomacy should analyze not only facilitating conditions but also active countermeasures. Brazil's Foreign Ministry was initially reluctant to enter a public relations competition that Camilión initiated but subsequently handled such efforts with aplomb. This suggests that the power to

⁷ I thank an anonymous reviewer for emphasizing this point.

minimize one's own win-set may be greater than the power of one's interlocutor to expand it. (In fact, Thomas Schelling's discussion (1960, 28) of leaders engaging publics emphasized the constriction rather than expansion of win-sets.) This might comfort leaders, who are better positioned than their rivals to persuade their own constituents. Relatedly, studies of US public diplomacy and anti-Americanism may be undercounting public diplomacy's success rate and potential, if the seeds of outreach are uprooted by alarmed target governments rather than simply failing to take root in society. More broadly, international relations arguments about the power of domestic lobbying groups or public opinion over foreign policy (Reiter and Stam 2002; Mearsheimer and Walt 2007) should investigate governments' ability to create offsetting pressure groups, either at home or abroad, and leaders' capacity to reshape or escape from public opinion (Schuessler 2015).

Third, studies of public diplomacy and two-level games could specify how principal-agent dynamics complicate diplomatic overtures (see Hutchings and Suri 2015, 15–16; Putnam 1988, 456). (In figure 1, this would disaggregate Home Government to look at intrastate bargaining.) Putnam (1988, 431–36) carefully addressed complexity in negotiation, discussing envoys rather than presidents as diplomatic actors, mentioning bureaucratic politics and conflicting preferences within central governments, and noting that negotiators face multiple constituencies rather than a single Level II game; however, his “stylized” treatment of Level II as “ratification” (435), exemplified by legislative approval of treaties, could misleadingly imply that ambassadors are the extension of unified executive leadership rather than agents in their own right. As the case of Oscar Camilión suggests, this simplifying assumption is problematic. Argentine archival documents indicate not only that Camilión was more committed to rapprochement with Brazil than his superiors were but also that public diplomacy reflected his initiative rather than his instructions. To what extent were senior Argentine decision makers aware of, and intentionally wielding, the different perspective of their ambassador in Brazil? In the complex world of principal-agent relations, an ambassador might be most useful when given instructions that he is not meant to fulfill or leeway to experiment in ways that could later be disavowed. In Camilión's case, it is difficult to say whether the difference of views between embassy and ministry was intentional (which might explain why Camilión kept his job and subsequently became foreign minister) or incidental (which might explain the close scrutiny and feedback on Argentine positions).

All of this supports recent studies on the importance of governmental credibility, consistency, and coordination (as well as the dangers of hypocrisy) in public diplomacy (see Cull 2012, 180–92; Seib 2009, 240–41). However, it presents a more dispiriting conclusion for conflict resolution, suggesting that scholars now need to analyze what many diplomats already confront (very much at their own risk): a heavily circumscribed set of scope conditions for successful engagement with foreign public opinion. The beauty of reverberation, as a metaphor, is twofold: it attests to the diplomatic art of indirection rather than frontal engagement, but it also suggests that policy initiatives reflect in complex and unintended ways off of political actors and their environment. Reverberation matters, but it is difficult to control and harder still to wield in the service of international peace.

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