



REMAPPING THE COLD WAR: ARGENTINE-ARAB WORLD TRANSNATIONALISM,

1946-1973

by

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## Introduction

Reflecting on the closing years of the Cold War, scholar Melvyn Leffler wrote that “most of us were astonished by the turn of events” when the international system “was reconfigured and an ideological struggle that had engulfed the globe for almost a half century was ended.”<sup>1</sup> The clash of ideologies had a sense of permanence. David Nichols characterizes this feeling of immutability as the “never again” mindset. Those who had endured World War II or colonization refused to tolerate any “conditions they believed” would lend themselves to a repeat of history.<sup>2</sup> As a result, governing strategies took on new life immediately after World War II. American democracy and Soviet communism morphed into personal and collective identities, and supporters often defended them with religious-like intensity. Likewise, the nontraditional style of warfare fostered this sense of permanence. Foes did not fight necessarily to capture territories or repel invading armies. Conflict was not designed necessarily to commandeer a strategic location or capture an area rich in valuable natural resources. The Cold War was a fight for “for the soul of mankind.”<sup>3</sup>

Proponents stood firm, unwavering in their beliefs, and thus, entrenched in their pursuit of ideological dominance. Struggles dominated by ideology become moving targets with tactical objectives that are difficult to articulate. When the esoteric overshadows the practical, policies emerge that rarely offer a clear end. As in the case of the Cold War, the struggle over the minds of the people proved difficult to strategize. Disconnects existed between goals and actual implementation. Despite that lack of clarity, the spread of ideology proved to be the dominant

<sup>1</sup> Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviets, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 2.

<sup>2</sup> David Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956: The President's Year of Crisis, Suez, and the Brink of War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 146.

national interest for both the Soviets and the Americans. Each saw their respective “mission as a part of a world-historical progression towards a given goal.”<sup>4</sup>

For superpowers, spreading their respective form of government overshadowed standard issues of trade and economic exchange. Both parties determined diplomatic relationships largely through whether an ally embraced or rejected their governing process. More importantly, an ideology’s adaptability and palatability meant that it knew no borders. Therefore, no region fell outside the superpowers’ “geostrategic orbits.”<sup>5</sup> The fight for the soul of the mankind played out in all corners of the globe. From China to Central America, South Africa to Germany, ideological and physical conflict ensued. Historian Jason Parker succinctly states that “the Cold War was a comprehensive struggle – geographical, ideological, and psychological – there was no dimension of international or domestic society it could not potentially touch.”<sup>6</sup>

There appeared no place immune to the Cold War conflict. This was especially true in those defining years between the late 1960s and the 1980s when brute determination overrode practical considerations. Strategy and circumstances propelled First World nations - namely the United States and the Soviet Union - into locales largely unidentifiable by their own constituencies. The United States found itself stuck, literally and metaphorically, in the thick of the Vietnam forests, while the Soviets’ quagmire in Afghanistan left them few options, but retreat. By its end, the Cold War had truly enveloped the entire world. Yet, even as scholarship gives more attention to the global nature of the war, the greater international community remains an appendage to the ideological narrative of the war. Although the tenants of each ideology remained largely consistent on an international level, the consequences of their implementation

<sup>4</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 72.

<sup>5</sup> Robert McMahon, ed. *The Cold War and the Third World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 139.

<sup>6</sup> Jason Parker “Decolonization, the Cold War, and the Post-Columbian Era,” in *The Cold War and the Third World* ed. Robert McMahon. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 125.

were neither uniform nor logical. The global consequences reflect the particularities of each nation and region.

The Cold War was greater than just a delicate, ideological stalemate between nuclear foes; it was a global battle over self-determination and identity in the Third World. Odd Arne Westad articulates this reality brilliantly in his 2007 retelling of the global Cold War. Westad examines the linkages that bound the First and Third World together in a truly international struggle. Economic, political, and military interventions in developing nations defined First World strategy, he argues, which has had a lasting impact until today. The decolonization process that emerged soon after World War II inspired nationalist movements that exposed cultural and geographical fault lines in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Territorial disputes, largely the product of colonialists' artificial border creations, led to sporadic conflict, while nation-building brought representation to some and alienation to others. Newly formed governments aggressively pursued modernization programs that improved some standards of living, but exacerbated other inequalities. Developing nations built their own collective identities at the same time that First World governments injected Cold War ideologies into the development process.<sup>7</sup> The multilayered, somewhat chaotic atmosphere contributed to the remaking of the international order, conceived new political movements, and incited regional conflict. This complex evolution and exchange came to define much of the Third World in such a dramatic fashion that developing nations created their own Cold War. Surprisingly, however, with such a particular experience, ongoing debates surrounding Cold War studies continue to focus almost exclusively on the First World.

Melvyn Leffler offers a comprehensive account of the Cold War by retracing the progression of the entire conflict in order to explain the evolution in Cold War ideologies and

<sup>7</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 1-7.

how the resulting competition became a fight for the soul of mankind. Leffler relies on a host of different perspectives to form an international narrative that portrays the war as an escalation of force - a graduation from mere political posturing to threats of nuclear exchange – without much sense of why or how. His approach ensures that readers grasp the war’s global ramifications. His chosen perspectives, however, are those of the major powers. His narrative relies almost entirely on the experiences of superpower leaders, like Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev. “My focus is on leaders,” he states plainly in the introduction.<sup>8</sup> Leffler is not alone.

Jeremy Suri’s monograph likewise underscores the war’s global complexities by weaving together the histories of Europe, the Soviet Union, Asia, and the United States into a tremendous picture of interconnectedness. The thrust of his project deals with the interaction between domestic protest and Cold War politics. Suri offers a multitude of government perspectives arguing that détente emerged in the early 1960s as a result of world leaders’ inability to manage domestic unrest. Détente represented an agreement that briefly halted international hostilities so that leaders could reinforce their domestic power. In short, détente ensured the Cold War remained cold. Additionally, as Suri surmises, “Détente, in this sense, had a social origin.”<sup>9</sup> Drawing a direct link between social upheaval and the internationality of the Cold War exposed the interdependence between social and diplomatic policies that helped shape the Cold War. Though Suri, like Leffler, contributed a path-breaking work to the field, he based most of his narrative on the experiences of First World leaders.

One can hardly dispute the impact of leading figures as these individuals were arguably the war’s most influential actors. Moreover, the period’s accessibility evidence generally rests with those former leading nations. Yet this approach continues to minimize the role developing

<sup>8</sup> Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremy Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 2.



countries played in the war. In fact, one could argue that the periphery (Third World) informed the center (First World).

The Third World's position in the Cold War narrative was not merely the result of superpower interventions. In other words, First World actions were not the only reason developing nations played a role in the era. Their presence was the result of a complicated interaction between national dynamics, Third World cooperation, and superpower meddling. Past scholarship has failed to account for this complex tapestry of social and political nuances and instead has concentrated on singular events or Third World relations with leading Cold War governments. Scholarship, by and large, treats the Third World as an extension of larger Cold War Communist and democratic policies. The approach privileges "the actions and motivations of policymakers" in Washington and Moscow.<sup>10</sup> As a result, Third World nations tend to play the role of the impressionable, juvenile countries where superpowers waged battle over the virgin minds of the inhabitants. Scholars' treatment casts the Third World as reactionary, dependent on the superpowers' policies and interests for its national well-being. Third World actors are portrayed "more as objects of manipulation than as active agents shaping their own fate."<sup>11</sup>

In fairness, leading powers had the reach and the resources to sell their own brand of governing ideology. The economic benefits tied to each were especially tempting for those governments in the throes of modernization. The United States goods matter to Third World economies in the way of products and patterns of production.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the perspective minimizes the role of the Third World and detracts from an otherwise fascinating story. Just as

<sup>10</sup> McMahon, *The Cold War and the Third World*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 30; For further discussions on the roles of economics in United States-Latin American relations, see Stephen G. Rabe, "Controlling Revolutions: Latin America, the Alliance for Progress, and Cold War Anticommunism." In *Kennedy's Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Mark T. Gilderhus, *The Second Century: U.S.-Latin American Relations Since 1889* (Wilmington: Scholarly Sources Inc., 2000), 113-162.

the First World exercised its agency by hawking its product like a seasoned salesman, developing nations exercised their own agency as an opposing merchant or wily consumer. In fact, the First World pursued its potential customers with such vigor – like in Vietnam and Afghanistan - that the Third World, in some cases, actually operated from a position of strength. When examined on its own terms, the world outside of the U.S.- Soviet binary provides a fascinating and elaborate history of agency, cooperation, and conflict.

In broader terms, the Third World represented a significant undercurrent that pulled superpowers in certain directions almost against their will. In their efforts to stop one another, the United States and the Soviet Union often found themselves drawn into conflict with a poor sense of purpose and frequently with a palpable lack of enthusiasm. Daniela Spenser notes that the Soviets “did not believe in guerrilla warfare as an effective method to weaken the United States” and terminated efforts towards that end in Latin America in the mid-1960s.<sup>13</sup> Yet when peaceful elections that benefited the Soviets were undone by armed coups, the Soviets felt compelled to support guerilla warfare. Reluctantly, the Soviets found themselves providing arms, training, and economic assistance to Latin American countries despite their initial convictions through 1989. Similarly, Leffler observes that the “Third World, particularly Afghanistan, drained Soviet resources” as revolutionary nationalist processes “withered while the risks and dangers increased.”<sup>14</sup> This reality was all too common for the superpowers, especially in the last two decades of the Cold War.

These circumstances underscore the important role the Third World played in the shaping the Cold War. “The rise of a decolonized Third World,” scholar Robert McMahon summarizes,

<sup>13</sup> Daniela Spenser, “The Caribbean Crisis: Catalyst for Soviet Projection in Latin America,” in *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, eds. Gilbert Joseph et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 77-111.

<sup>14</sup> Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, 404.

“constitutes a historical force of perhaps equal weight and consequence.”<sup>15</sup> The Third World came to be the counterweight to the aligned world. In some cases, countries like Egypt and Cuba banded together to protect their own interests and offer a resistance to superpowers’ encroachment. These mutual alliances were hardly neat or harmonious, but their interactions offer insights into another historical force in the Cold War. Robert McMahon’s edited anthology is the necessary counter to First World scholarship. In it, he cobbles together several Third World perspectives that together focus on the movement outside the U.S-Soviet binary. McMahon reminds readers that the decolonization process over the first two decades of the Cold War created a new and volatile global landscape. In fact, approximately forty new nations were born during those years. “The newly emerging areas,” he writes, “threw off the shackles of colonialism and neocolonialism during the latter half of the twentieth-century, boldly articulated their own national aspirations, strove to achieve economic as well as political independence, and became increasingly influential agents of their own destinies.”<sup>16</sup>

The rapidly changing landscape was more than a mere backdrop to the fierce competition between the Americans and the Soviets. The environment was an integral part to the war’s evolution. Memories of colonialism “encouraged ambitious schemes to remake Third World societies” through grand projects of mechanization and resettlement.<sup>17</sup> The multiple national transformations remade, or at minimum, challenged the rigid international order. The explosion in the number of new nations represented nascent constituencies who themselves had not fully identified their own political and economic futures. The conflict came to be a complicated picture of post-colonial nation-building, ideological influence, and global warfare. Latin America, more so many regions, felt the brunt of this chaotic, yet hopeful time.

<sup>15</sup> McMahon, *The Cold War and the Third World*, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 1-2.

<sup>17</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 79.

## The Latin American Experience

Latin America's unique history complicated its story as one of the most contested regions of the Cold War. The diverse sets of societies, politics, economies, and ideologies provided fertile ground for all types of thought. Latin America presented itself as an area of limitless opportunity for Cold War exploitation. As a result, Greg Grandin explains, the Cold War in Latin America became the "politicalization and internationalization of everyday life and familiar encounters."<sup>18</sup> Gilbert Joseph writes that the Cold War was "embedded in a particularly ferocious dialectic linking reformist and revolutionary projects for social change and national development and the excessive counterrevolutionary" brought on by the end of World War II.<sup>19</sup> The dialectic, he goes on to argue, shaped regional life and played out in "overlapping and interdependent domestic and international fields of political and social power."<sup>20</sup> The penetration of the Cold War threatened sovereignty throughout the region.

The failed promises of autonomy in the postcolonial era left many in Latin America disillusioned. Latin America appeared to be suffering from the same frustration felt in the Middle East and Asia: the Cold War seemed to be the new age of imperialism. The region's anti-imperial fervor related to economic hegemony. Many in Latin America resented the heavy hand of economic imperialism and the history U.S. intervention. Most could not resist, however, since they depended on U.S. and European capital investment.<sup>21</sup> Economic dependence left nations in Latin America feeling disillusioned by the promises of post-colonial autonomy. In addition, Latin America possessed arguably the most diverse political, cultural, and economic

<sup>18</sup> Greg Grandin, *The Last Colonial Massacre: Latin America and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>19</sup> Gilbert Joseph, "What We Now Know and Should Know: Bringing Latin America More Meaningfully into Cold War Studies" in *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, eds. Gilbert Joseph et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008) 3-46.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 78.

conditions. A host of Latin American countries, like Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico, held impressive international influence and were active participants in United Nations. Meanwhile, most Central American countries suffered from poor economic and social conditions that left them dependent on alliances in and outside of the Western Hemisphere. Some nations trended towards representative government, while most either embraced Soviet communism, like Cuba, or became right-wing dictatorships. Still others abstained from endorsing either. Domestically, political fragility plagued Latin America. Instability retarded or stalled national progress and remained an ever-present threat to any potential international alliances. Even relatively stable societies, such as Argentina, experienced erratic changes in government. Scholars tend to view Latin America's diversity and political instability as a consequence of regional issues. But one must account for Latin America's role internationally to adequately understand the totality of these nuanced experiences. In particular, studies remain focused on the Western Hemisphere without accounting for Latin American's contribution to the global Cold War.<sup>22</sup>

For example, Ana Margheritis' contemporary work *Argentina's Foreign Policy: Domestic Politics and Democracy Promotion in the Americas* is a popular narrative dedicated to the country's relations within the hemisphere. Her analysis on Argentina's intra-hemispheric diplomatic operations explains the motivations behind its international policies.<sup>23</sup> She argues that appearances play an enormous role in formulating region policy and those practices extend into international relationships. This is a key truth in understanding Argentina's global Cold

<sup>22</sup> The examples of this include Frank O. Mora and Jeanne A. K. Hey, eds., *Latin American Caribbean Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Harold Eugene Davis, et al, *Latin American Diplomatic History: An Introduction* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1977); Heraldo Munoz and Joseph S. Tulchin, eds., *Latin American Nations in World Politics* (London: Westview Press, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> Ana Margheritis, *Argentina's Foreign Policy: Domestic Politics and Democracy Promotion in the Americas* (Boulder: Firstforum Press, 2010).

War diplomacy, as we will see. Margheritis' narrative, nevertheless, remains focused on Latin American diplomacy within a regional context.

Martin Mullins *In the Shadow of the Generals: Foreign Policy Making in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile* is another prominent work that addresses Argentina's foreign policy. Mullins describes the international affairs of the "Southern Cone" as three-pronged strategy: exercise of territorial sovereignty, resisting or assisting United States hegemony, and active participation in United Nations.<sup>24</sup> Mullins argues that political pressures within the hemisphere are the greatest influence over each country's respective international affairs. His "rational dependency model," argues that Southern Cone countries cannot avoid U.S. presence, and thus, must deal with the United States through either assistance or resistance.<sup>25</sup> Although the idea of resistance typifies President Juan Perón's relationship with the United States during the early years of the Cold War, Mullins still maintains a Western Hemisphere focus. He does not connect Latin America to broader themes in international affairs.

Comparatively, William Michael Schmidli's *The Fate of Freedom* is a refreshing take on Argentina's foreign policies during the Cold War.<sup>26</sup> Schmidli analyzes how the Carter administration rewrote U.S. Cold War policy towards Latin American by refocusing the government's efforts on combating human rights abuses throughout the region. At the direction of the White House, U.S. officials confronted the Argentine government about its deplorable tactics during the so-called Dirty War of the 1970s. The American government then denied previously promised military hardware and economic assistance as punishment for the abuses.

<sup>24</sup> Martin Mullins, *In the Shadow of the Generals: Foreign Policy Making in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile* (London: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2006); The Southern Cone is a politically geographic construction that refers to the Southernmost nations of South America, including Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 36.

<sup>26</sup> William Michael Schmidli, *The Fate of Freedom Elsewhere: Human Rights and U.S. Cold War Policy Toward Argentina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

The story offers a unique glimpse into Argentina's foreign policies amid Cold War. But Schmidli's work is a study on U.S.-Latin American relations and not one focused on Argentina's role.

The scholarship that does brave the waters outside the Western Hemisphere is generally pursuant to specific subjects, like security and commodities, rather than larger trends in diplomacy. For the purposes here, the study of security can demonstrate how domestic policies influence international policy. One such example is Jorge Dominguez's anthology *International Security and Democracy: Latin America the Caribbean in the Post-Cold War Era*.<sup>27</sup>

Dominguez and his contributors offer comprehensive views retracing the evolution of foreign policy from its roots in regional circumstances. The book examines "how democratic governments in the hemisphere can more effectively deal with the often delicate and complex balance between international security challenges and domestic peace and stability."<sup>28</sup>

Dominguez's work was intended as a practical exercise in identifying solutions to decades-old regional and international disputes, but it also underscores how security informs global policy. He argues for a linear trajectory in foreign policy development in which nations react to regional conflict and the need for increased security by pursuing transatlantic relationships. These alliances then mature from a marriage of convenience into formal diplomatic alliances. In short, local security solutions can evolve into global alliances. Despite all of this, security is merely a symptom of foreign policy directives, not the cause. The narrowness of the topic misses the greater potential in Latin American diplomacy in the Cold War.

<sup>27</sup> Jorge Dominguez, ed., *International Security and Diplomacy: Latin America and the Caribbean in the Post-Cold War Era* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1998).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, ix.

Frank Parkinson's 1973 publication *Latin America, the Cold War, and the World Powers 1945-1973* comes very close in addressing Latin America's role in the global Cold War.<sup>29</sup> Published during the Cold War, Parkinson's work does not have the luxury of post-Cold War analysis, but he does offer useful theories concerning the Cold War in Latin America. Parkinson argues that communism failed to take root Latin America at the outset of the Cold War due to the Soviet's "barely concealed contempt" for the region.<sup>30</sup> This afforded the United States opportunities to intervene early on without serious political competition. He argues that initially unopposed, the United States and its policies became so unyielding that many disenchanted Latin American governments turned to Third World relations as a counterweight to American hegemony. Parkinson affirms that a significant Third World exchange commenced almost immediately after the Cold War erupted, suggesting that, not only do developing nations need more attention, but scholar need to revisit their role in shaping the Cold War. U.S. domination, however, did not mean Latin American countries avoided conflict like other regions in the world.

Latin America became a brutal and violent proving ground for Cold War ideologies. The Cold War in Latin America was anything but cold. Hal Brands' most recent publication recasts the Cold War in Latin America through a multiplicity of divergent interests as complex, chaotic, and brutal. His work highlights the complicated nature of the war beyond the tired and rather simple U.S. capitalism-versus-Soviet socialism construction. In reality, Brands writes, the United States was merely one of several "self-interested meddlers" vying for influence in Latin America.<sup>31</sup> The Cold War in Latin America actually became "a series of overlapping conflicts," that involved Eastern-bloc Communists, right-wing militants, leftist guerillas, and Americans, to

<sup>29</sup> Frank Parkinson, *Latin America, the Cold War, and the World Powers, 1945-1973* (London: Sage Publishers, 1974), 13.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 221.



name a few.<sup>32</sup> Brands captures the global conditions in Latin America that past narratives have failed to account for, underscoring an important point; although the First World was locked in a tense, bloodless stalemate, Latin America was consumed by abject brutality and violence. Other authors echo Brands' conclusions.

In an indictment of U.S. Cold War policy in Latin America, Stephen Rabe highlights the ruthless anti-Communist violence in the region, arguing that the U.S. government regarded the savageness as an acceptable byproduct of intervention.<sup>33</sup> The violence seriously hurt U.S. image of American democracy throughout the region. Greg Grandin also addresses anti-Communist violence with a case study of the 1978 Panzós MassArce in Guatemala. His work shows how the ideological struggle in Latin America had devolved into an excuse for unchecked, unregulated violence. The brutal and perhaps avoidable slaughter of innocent civilians was the Cold War in its ugliest form. Yet, while all three works are informative, none discuss Argentina at any length or nor its international impact during the Cold War.<sup>34</sup> In essence, the Soviets and the Americans, and their respective surrogates, continue to dominate literature on Latin America's Cold War.

The scholarship needs fresh, new narratives that integrate perspectives from outside the Western Hemisphere beyond those of the dominant U.S.-Soviet narrative. This project should approach that mark with an analysis of relations within the developing world on its own terms. The narrative narrows in on actors from two of the most contested regions of the Cold War, Latin America and the Middle East. The following work is part of a Cold War reevaluation that advances an invigorating new examination on Argentine relations with the Arab World amid the spread of Arab nationalism, the influence of Third Worldism, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. This

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Grandin, *The Last Colonial MassArce*.

project specifically examines how the nonaligned tendencies of Argentina and reformist Arab states sparked an unprecedented form of transnational exchange amid the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict and tense Cold War alliances. The unparalleled exchange saw Argentina become one of the only Latin American nations to affirm the Arab position in the U.N. partition debates and the first to establish relations with newly emerging Arab states. The subsequent Cold War atmosphere, however, forced Argentina to reconcile its remarkable diplomacy in the Arab World and its large Arab immigrant community with its claims of noninterference in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Despite those claims, however, the conflict manifested itself in Argentina as unprecedented ethnic strife ensued. In short, Argentina became the Latin American front in the Arab-Israeli conflict. As an illustration of the international Cold War, the regional battles that defined the era complicated matters far from their location.

While the topic reflects current trends in transnational studies and international history, it also offers a new, largely unexplored perspective in the evolution of political cooperation and cultural exchange among developing countries. These relations represent the formal and informal state-to-state interaction between Third World nations that helped shape the Cold War.

### **Argentina and the Cold War**

Tremendously unique in its own right, Argentina challenged and obeyed rules of Cold War alignment in a puzzling manner. Its reactions to the Cold War remain difficult to discern and thus represent a refreshing deviation from typical narratives of Cold War alignment. While the Cold War shares similar stories across time and place, Argentina's history is distinct. Argentina's international activity remains the key element to its uniqueness and offers insight

into broader themes of Latin America's role outside the Western Hemisphere during the Cold War.

During the colonial period, the land that became Argentina was distant from centers of Spanish power, affording locals relative relief from colonialism. Distance allowed society to attempt self-governance earlier than others in Latin America. This early sense of independence, coupled with incredible economic potential from developed port systems and a vast agricultural interior, gave rise to the nation's diplomatic prowess. Argentina appeared poised for international success entering the modern era. Yet, the early 1940s began what would be decades of political instability and fiscal failures.

Argentina's neutrality during World War II – a position carried over from World War I – began a process of alienation on the international stage. While popular at home, the policy angered international allies. The United States, in particular, levied economic embargos on arms and withheld credit and critical machinery slated to support modernization programs.<sup>35</sup> Allied condemnations, however, did not change Argentina's policy. In fact, the defiant Argentine government grew even more insubordinate after the overthrow of then President Ramón Castillo by a band of young, nationalist army officers, known as the United Officers Group (GOU). These men endorsed a broad movement that promoted the nationalization of industry and social reform. The group called for improvements in labor conditions and the formation of unions, among other things. As a member of the GOU, Juan Perón used his position as the head of the Labor Department to secure the support of the working-class. He was able to build a dedicated constituency, which proved pivotal for his presidential victory in February 1946. Nevertheless, the coup had further strained relations with the United States.

<sup>35</sup> Raanan Rein, *The Franco-Perón Alliance: Relations between Spain and Argentina, 1946-1955* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993), 18.

The GOU had little regard for American opposition to the overthrow. Sensing intransigence, the U.S. government expanded its embargos and called for Argentina's political isolation in the Western Hemisphere. World War II further crippled Argentina's financial well-being, having been cut off from its largest trade partners in Europe. Perón came to power at a moment of financial insecurity. Harkening to his roots as a labor leader, Perón emphasized labor relations and industrial nationalization, which frightened international investors and discouraged the arrival of new foreign capital. Threats to foreign investment, devastation of European markets, and the political instability together undermined Argentina's viability. Perón's ouster in 1955 then began a series of coups and administrative turnovers that eroded confidence in Argentina. The fight between *Perónistas* and their opponents defined the nation through the remaining Cold War and destabilized the government.<sup>36</sup>

Decades of precarious domestic circumstances forced Argentina to balance a strong desire for autonomy with its reluctant dependence on foreign investment. As a result, Argentina held an intermediate position, of sorts, within the international system. Internationally, Third World cooperation found traction almost immediately after the end of World War II. Common experiences provided a bond that took on a deeper meaning than that of mere convenience. As the Cold War alliances settled into a rigidly tiered system, developing nations saw the need to organize themselves collectively in a response to U.S. and Soviet alignments (although broader cooperation later proved unreliable and inconsistent). This tiered reality is what makes Argentina's situation so compelling.

The South American country found itself straddling the Cold War fence between independence and cooperation. The circumstances inspired Perón's famous third position strategy designed to counter the Cold War atmosphere through the collective power of

<sup>36</sup> David Rock, *Argentina, 1516 – 1987* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

developing countries. The intent behind his policy remains a point of contention among historians. Ignacio Klich argues that the third position doctrine concerned hemispheric issues, simply a planned “amalgam of multifaceted regional policies.”<sup>37</sup> Another author suggests two alternatives. First, Perón referred to “third” as an economic position somewhere between the traditional oligarchy of Argentina and the underprivileged working class. A second was perhaps a political “third” position between the radicals and conservatives, who dominated national politics.<sup>38</sup> Harold Peterson, however, contends that Perón’s third position was merely an approach to policy development. “As Perón himself characterized it,” he writes, “[the Third position] was fluid, not fixed, and, as circumstances demanded, might veer to the right or to the left.”<sup>39</sup> Each of these interpretations carries with them elements of truth. I contend, however, that Perón’s third position agenda was a foreign policy matter, inspired by the Cold War and designed to harness the collective strength of the developing world. Perón aimed to build cooperation with those developing nations that served Argentina’s interests and that were not privileged to be among the First World order. President Juan Perón, feeling pressure from U.S. officials, was determined to resist U.S. demands. He also remained cautious in pursuing diplomacy that would upset the American government.<sup>40</sup> The precedent began long before the Cold War.

Argentina is a self-described competitor of the United States. For decades, Argentina made a concerted effort to appear independent of U.S. influence. Joseph Tulchin argues that throughout the twentieth-century, to prove autonomy, Argentina frequently took diplomatic positions

<sup>37</sup> Ignacio Klich, “Equidistance and Gradualism in Argentine Foreign Policy Towards Israel and the Arab World, 1949-1955” in *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies on History and Literature*, ed. David Sheinin et al. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998) 219-38.

<sup>38</sup> George Blanksten, *Perón’s Argentina* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 292-293.

<sup>39</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 463.

<sup>40</sup> Glenn J. Dorn, *Perónistas and New Dealers: U.S.-Argentine Rivalry and the Western Hemisphere (1946-1950)* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2005).

counter to those of the United States, sometimes to its own detriment.<sup>41</sup> As the Cold War set in, Perón could not escape the repercussions of alienating his northern neighbor, yet he was determined to exercise international autonomy. Scholar Harold F. Peterson separates Perón's foreign policy into three major principles: "resist all efforts to strengthen the regional system [dominated by the United States]; emphasize the efficacy of bilateral rather than multilateral diplomacy; and check the slightest attempt to impair national sovereignty."<sup>42</sup> One could add to this list, Argentina's historic aim for visibility and legitimacy on the international stage. This tradition had roots in the country's relationships outside the Western Hemisphere, relationships fueled by a rich immigrant legacy. As scholar David Rock recounts, Argentina's immigrant legacy demanded a globally-focused foreign policy.<sup>43</sup> Other than Cuba, arguably no other Latin American country was so influenced by international events than Argentina, and unlike less powerful Latin American countries, Argentina could pursue relationships outside the Western Hemisphere more unilaterally. Even with such a capability, however, Argentina often preferred neutrality and balance in diplomatic affairs.

Scholars Alberto Conil Paz and Gustavo Ferrari explore this emphasis in neutrality in their 1966 work *Argentina's Foreign Policy, 1930-1962*. In addition to Perón's policies during World War II, the editors consider Argentina's early work in international organizations as an additional lens through which to understand the nation's diplomatic practices. For Ferrari and Paz, the Argentine government's neutrality during the World War II was only one example of government's traditional nonpartisanship. Another perspective is Argentina's approach at the

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States: A Conflicted Relationship* (Boston: Macmillan Publishing, 1990), 18-19; For further discussions on the competitive relationship between Argentina and the United States, see David Sheinin, *Searching for Authority: Pan Americanism, Diplomacy and Politics in US-Argentine Relations, 1910-1930* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 1998); Mario Rapoport, *Gran Bretaña Estados Unidos y las clases dirigentes argentinas: 1940-1945* (Buenos Aires: Editorial de Belgrano, 1981).

<sup>42</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 469.

<sup>43</sup> Rock, *Argentina*, 40-50.

United Nations. Argentina, they argue, would go to great lengths to appear active through joining committees and engaging in debate, while ultimately remaining neutral.<sup>44</sup> In this process, Argentina earned a reputation for noninterference in other countries' domestic affairs.

Argentina's attitude towards preserving appearances of neutrality is an important element in its relationship with the Arab World. Argentina's formal neutrality conflicted with its Third World relationships and activities in international organizations. The Cold War, First World meddling, and the rise of Third Worldism encouraged a reimagining of Argentine foreign policy. Perón came to power at this moment of significant change and revamped Argentina's Middle East policy in a manner that went against tradition. For this reason, Argentina's relations with the Arab World were largely a product of the Cold War and decolonization presented new opportunities for furthering Argentina's international significance. The Arab-Israeli conflict, however, was the impetus for change.

### **Argentina and the Middle East**

The roots of the conflict can be traced back to British and French mandates, the territorial occupation which had divided up much of the Middle East after World War I. European leaders recognized soon after the conclusion of the war that their mandates were unsustainable. Their exodus left the Balfour Declaration (a proposal that inspired the artificial segmentation of the formerly mandated areas into nations) as the blueprint for the region's future layout. The "haphazardly drawn borders" led to untold misery for those who "did not recognize themselves as part of that entity."<sup>45</sup> The carve-up of the old Ottoman Empire sparked fierce conflict among tribes and religious communities. The Baathist regime in Iraq alienated Shia Muslims and

<sup>44</sup> Alberto Conil Paz and Gustavo Ferrari, eds., *Política exterior argentina 1930-1962* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Huemal, S.A., 1964).

<sup>45</sup> Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 94.

Kurds, while Jews and Arabs populations fought for land in the former Palestine territories. As the familiar story goes, yet another former European-occupied region was left to sort out its own future while shouldering the burdens of colonization. The Cold War only complicated the situation.

The Middle East attracted the immediate attention of Cold War foes. First World nations saw opportunities to expand their presence and ensure access to the region's natural resources.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, the Third World movement found fertile ground as Abdul Gamal Nasser of Egypt became, at least temporarily, the venerated leader of the cause.<sup>47</sup> At the same moment, Arab and Jewish nationalist movements that had "pushed relentlessly forward," previously oblivious to the other, now collided.<sup>48</sup> Over time, the disputed lands once held by the British in Palestine served as a microcosm of the ideological battles waged globally. The themes of decolonization, democracy, revolution, and homeland, inherent in the Cold War, became equally prevalent in the lexicon of the Arab-Israeli struggle. Similar themes and language assisted in internationalizing the conflict and elevated the geographical dispute to an ideological struggle, almost on par with the Cold War. In a short order, this small stretch of land had become "the world's cockpit."<sup>49</sup>

The Arab-Israeli conflict especially resonated with Latin American populations. The pan-Arab movement seeking to unite Arab nations, followed later by the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in the late 1960s, both found receptive audiences in Latin America. The audience proved so receptive that many Latin American leaders gave President Nasser of Egypt a

<sup>46</sup> On discussions of topics of oil exploitation and general encroachment of the First World into the Middle East, see Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870-1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); James A Bill and W.M. Roger Louis, eds. *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988);

<sup>47</sup> Gilles Kepel provides excellent analysis on Nasserism in *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Also see, Salim Yaqub "The Cold War in the Middle East" in *The Cold War and the Third World*, ed. Robert McMahon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1-11.

<sup>48</sup> Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration* (New York: Random House Publishing, 2010), 178.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 3.



free hand to push Arab League agendas in the region.<sup>50</sup> Opening the region to Middle East politics led to the influence of outside interests tied to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The internationalized conflict influenced Latin American politics and society perhaps more so than in any other region of the world. Scholar Joann Fagot Aviel analyzes the impact of the conflict in Latin America with her examination of the Sandinista government's Cold War relationship with Israel and the Arab bloc.<sup>51</sup> The Arab-Israeli conflict, she argues, played out on Nicaraguan soil through Israeli arms deals and the presence of PLO representatives. The Sandinistas had a precarious time balancing their ideological bonds with the PLO and the Arab World versus the practicality of reliable Israeli arms trades. Moreover, she argues, the Sandinistas had to deal with U.S. hegemony, which eventually provoked the Contras to seek and receive funding from the Saudi government in the 1980s. Simply put, the Arab-Israeli crisis had an undeniable impact on the Nicaraguan government. Cheryl Rubenberg-echoes this precarious balance in the case of Guatemala.<sup>52</sup> She argues that Guatemala and Israel, an unlikely duo at the time, developed a useful trade relationship during the Cold War. Regional isolation after 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict forced Israel to maximize its trade opportunities outside the greater Middle East. Israel found Guatemala to be a valuable partner for transatlantic weapons trade. Guatemala needed weapons for its ongoing Cold War conflicts. Israeli weapons flooded the Central American state and had direct impact on Guatemalan fighting during the Cold War. The internationalization of the conflict, however, played out in Argentina far earlier than in most of Latin America.

<sup>50</sup> Parkinson, *Latin America, the Cold War, and the World Powers*, 99.

<sup>51</sup> JoAnn Fagot Aviel, "The Enemy of My Enemy: The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Nicaragua," in *Central America and the Middle East: The Internationalization of the Crises*, Damian Fernandez, ed. (Miami: Florida International University, 1990), 31-41.

<sup>52</sup> Cheryl A. Rubenberg, "The United States, Israel, and Guatemala," in *Central America and the Middle East*, ed. Damian Fernandez. (Miami: Florida International University, 1990), 94-121.

The conflict in Palestine ignited a new era of Arab and Jewish political campaigns designed to mobilize each one's respective ethnic communities in Argentina and press the government for diplomatic support. Arabs and Israelis did not randomly target Argentina. The South American country had a historic connection to the region. By the start of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Argentina boasted the largest Jewish population in Latin America and an even larger Arab community. The Jewish population in Argentina by 1947 was approximately 275,000, while experts estimated the Arab population to be 400,000.<sup>53</sup> Three decades later Arabs constituted the third largest ethnic group in Argentina, behind only the Spanish and the Italians.<sup>54</sup> Other, lesser-known connections existed as well. Austro-Hungarian journalist Theodor Herzl, the so-called "ambassador of the emerging Zionist movement," wrote extensively about Jews needing a homeland to escape anti-Semitism.<sup>55</sup> In his proposals, Herzl recommended two sites for a Jewish homeland: Palestine and Argentina. Palestine represented a historical homeland, he argued, while Argentina possessed a large, fertile land suitable for sustaining a new nation.<sup>56</sup> Several years later, Moshe Tov, a native of Argentina, joined the Zionist movement and played a key role in the founding of the first Jewish state. "After the establishment of Israel," Raanan Rein recalls, "he [Tov] became director of the Latin American

<sup>53</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 6; Theresa Alfaro Velcamp confirms the approximate size of the Argentine-Arab community and discusses reasons for immigration in "The Historiography of Arab Immigration to Argentina: The Intersection of the Imaginary and the Real Country," in *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America: Images and Realities*, Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey Lesser, eds. (London: Routledge, 1998), 227-48; See also Michael Humphrey "Sectarianism and the Politics of Immigrant Identity," in *The Lebanese in the World: a Century of Emigration*, eds. Albert Hourani and N. Shehadi. (London: I.B Tauris, 1993), 443-71; Abdelouahed Akmir, "La inmigración arabe en Argentina" in *El Mundo Arabe y América Latina*, ed. Raymundo Kabchi (Paris: UNESCO, Prodhufi, 1997), 57-122; Evelyn Alsultany and Ella Shohat, *Between the Middle East and the Americas: The Cultural Politics of Diaspora* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> Victor A. Mirelman, "Attitude Towards Jews in Argentina," in *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn, 1975), 212.

<sup>55</sup> Ritchie Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2004), 5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

division of the foreign ministry and a member of the Israeli delegation to the United Nations.”<sup>57</sup> Separately, Syrian Antoun Saade found refuge in Argentina during the 1930s after openly advocating for a unified Syria against French rule. For years, Saade used Argentina as a safe haven for launching condemnations against French occupation. Saade returned to Syria in 1946 after the withdrawal of French troops and founded the Syrian Social National Party (SSNP), whose eventual size was only rivaled by the Baath Party. Saade’s SSNP went on to play a vital role in shaping the post-mandate Middle East.<sup>58</sup>

Aware of the value in Argentina’s demographics and political sensibilities, delegations from the Arab League and separate Arab nations aggressively courted Argentina for political support. Missions to Argentina began in earnest prior to the crucial vote on the Palestine partition at the United Nations and only grew in strength after Israel declared nationhood. Arab representatives organized Argentine opposition to Israel through resident missions in Buenos Aires. The Arab campaigning continued for decades with proven success. In fact, years later Perón would become the first non-Arab to be awarded the Syrian Order of the Umayya. Political representation by the Arab League and Arab nations, however, shifted after the Arabs’ epic defeat in 1967 at the hands of the Israelis. The state-sponsored, pan-Arab movement lost its credibility with the Arab street. Palestinians, once historically dependent on Arab governments’ support, lost confidence in their Arab brethren and resorted to self-reliance through a movement designed to internationalize their plight. The transition in Arab influence from the Arab governments to the PLO after the 1967 war proved a vital turning point in Argentina’s approach to Middle East diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli conflict. Likewise, the PLO represented a comparatively radical, unprecedented approach to gaining support for the movement.

<sup>57</sup> Raanan Rein, *Argentine Jews Or Jewish Argentines? Essays on Ethnicity, Identity, and Diaspora* (London: Brill Publishing, 2010), 118.

<sup>58</sup> Jamal Wakim, *The Struggle of Major Powers over Syria* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2013), 80-81.

Editors Neil Livingstone and David Halevy have contributed a detailed account of the PLO, outlining funding mechanisms, organization, and international activity. Although the information does not address international relations with Argentina, it helps us understand Third World diplomacy, especially in regards to the organization's global reach. No one before has explored in such depth the organization's rapid and immense growth in international notoriety climaxing with Yasser Arafat's speech to the United Nations in 1974.<sup>59</sup> Although the narrative can read like a catalog of PLO operations, the book as a whole demonstrates the PLO's rise in political influence in the global community. The influence the organization wielded among developing nations partly explains Argentina's later affinity with the Palestinian movement and the evolution of its relations with the Arab World in general.

Paul Chamberlain addresses the PLO in an international context. In his work *The Global Offensive*, Chamberlain treats the PLO as the primary actor in a global struggle of insurgency and revolution among Third World actors, rather than a regional amateur in the Middle East.<sup>60</sup> The Palestinian movement, he argues, drew inspiration from past challenges to the First World in Vietnam, Cuba, and Mao's China, and the PLO then took its story global through a well-advertised campaign. In short order, the movement morphed into a type of political brand that attracted nations and groups disaffected by post-colonial circumstances. These observations are critical to understanding the politicalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moreover, his work clarifies how the Palestinian brand found an audience in places like Argentina after the 1967 Six-Day War. Although Chamberlain does not analyze the PLO's reception in Latin America, his theories on the PLO's internationalization uncover a crucial element to understanding

<sup>59</sup> Neil C. Livingstone and David Halevy, eds. *Inside the PLO: Covert Units, Secret Funds and the War against Israel and the United States* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1990).

<sup>60</sup> Paul Chamberlain, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Era* (London: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Argentina's Middle East foreign policy during the latter years of the Cold War. His evidence, in part, explains Argentina's slow drift from diplomatic parity towards the Third World. The scholarship, albeit slim, on Argentine-Arab World relations confirms a willing partnership.

### **Argentine-Arab World Relations**

Ignacio Klich and David Sheinin are the foremost historians on Argentina's relationship to the Islamic World, having detailed, to some degree, Argentina's early reactions to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Klich's publications are foundational to the particular history of Argentina and the Arab World. His contributions on early twentieth-century Arab immigration and Argentine diplomacy during the partition of Palestine have almost singlehandedly provided the groundwork necessarily for future scholarship. However, Klich's works are generally article-length publications whose date range does not go beyond the mid-1950s.<sup>61</sup> My project delivers a more detailed assessment of the early period and an analysis of the subsequent events. On the other hand, David Sheinin's recent 2012 work on Argentine policy regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict in the late 1960s and early 1970s is the first of its kind.<sup>62</sup> His path-breaking work has injected new life into work on the period, which has been especially difficult to reconstruct in the absence of Argentine archival materials. Yet even with these accomplishments, Sheinin's article-length

<sup>61</sup> Ignacio Klich, "Argentine-Ottoman Relations and Their Impact on Immigrants from the Middle East: A History of Unfulfilled Expectations, 1910-1915," *The Americas* (October 1993): 177-205; Ignacio Klich, "Towards an Arab-Latin American Bloc? The Genesis of Argentine-Middle East Relations: Jordan, 1945-54," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (July 1995): 550-572.

<sup>62</sup> David Sheinin published an informative article on Argentina's foreign policy with the Middle East after the Six-Day War in "Reading Kissinger's Avatars: Cold War Pragmatism in Argentina's Middle East Policy" in *The New Jewish Argentina: Facets of Jewish Experience in the Southern Cone*, eds. Adriana Brodsky and Raanan Rein (London: Brill Press, 2012), 263-91; The handful of other publications addressing Argentina and the Six-Day War focus more on Jewish connections, but do offer valuable insight into Argentina's Middle East policy, such as Haim Avni "The Impact of the Six-Day War on a Zionist Community: The Case of Argentina," in *The Six-Day War and World Jewry*, ed. Eli Lederhendler (College Park: University of Maryland, 2000), 137-165; Leonardo Senkman "Repercussions of the Six-Day War in the Leftist Jewish Argentine Camp: The Rise of *Fraie Schtime*, 1967-1969," in *The Six-Day War and World Jewry*, ed. Eli Lederhendler (College Park: University of Maryland, 2000), 167-186.

publication is brief and focuses primarily on U.S.-Argentine relations in light of Middle East developments.

Raanan Rein is another scholar who has contributed to the historiography of Argentina's Middle East foreign policy during the Cold War.<sup>63</sup> His important monograph, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews: Perón, the Eichmann Capture and After*, fills a "void in Israeli and Argentine" history, and is not a "treatise" on the Argentina's Jewish community – as so many before him have done.<sup>64</sup> Rein uses the debate surrounding the Israeli-Palestine partition and the Eichmann capture in 1960 as illustrations of the complicated dynamics in Argentine-Israeli relations. He proposes that Argentine leadership, even prior to World War II, had to strike a delicate balance between the largest Jewish population in South America and the need for relations with the Arab World. The partitioning episode exposed deep rifts in Argentine politics that pitted pro-Arab leaders against those supportive of a Jewish state. Domestic anti-Semitism, however, dwarfed those earlier political rifts in aftermath of the Eichmann kidnapping. Attacks against Argentina's Jewish community reached near unprecedented levels, Rein writes. Then Argentina severed ties with Israel, angered by the kidnapping. In short, Argentina played a role in Middle East issues from the beginning of the Palestine dilemma.

Although Rein's contributions offer critical insights into Argentina's Cold War diplomacy in the Arab World, his work focuses almost exclusively on Argentina's contacts with Israel. Whereas Arab participants are supplemental to Rein's narrative, this project concentrates on Arab political influence in Argentina and Argentina's Middle East foreign policy. This approach advances an alternative perspective on Argentine foreign relations beyond the ordinary U.S.-Soviet-Latin America construct found in both Latin American and Cold War scholarship.

<sup>63</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, xv.

The end of the Cold War allows for this more nuanced approach, which is useful for understanding the war in hindsight.

## Sources

The sources for Cold War topics outside U.S., European, or Soviet spheres are difficult to obtain. My research required a mix of creativity and investigative determination, requiring visits to multiple sites to connect disconnected information. That said, my research approach was almost entirely archival. The main Argentine resource is the *Archivo del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto* in Buenos Aires. The materials within the Political Division contain extensive communication between the Argentine government and the Arab World and non-Arab countries, such as Pakistan and Iran. However, the available materials on Arab relations are sparse after 1952. The amount of available documentation also varied widely between countries.

The enormous gaps in information required me to incorporate archives from outside of Argentina. Materials from the National Archives in College Park, Maryland and the Foreign Relations of the United States publications provided excellent material related to Argentina's activity in the Arab World. The information at U.S. research sites provided critical, third-party perspectives that filled the gaps in Argentine materials. Newspaper clippings, provide observations of those stationed in both Argentina and Arab countries, and other related materials together offer interesting insights into those relationships. Likewise, the Lyndon Johnson Presidential Library offered important documentation related to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and vital perspectives on Argentina's role in the United Nations peace negotiations. Newly declassified reports, never seen outside government channels, added critical perspectives to

Argentina's role in the Arab World during the late 1960s. The Gerald Ford Presidential Library provided similar context for Argentina in the early-to-mid 1970s. The evidence from the late 1960s and early 1970s offers a window into a turbulent period in Argentina's domestic affairs and explanations on how Argentina became the Latin American front in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Anti-Defamation League archives also added critical information on ethnic tensions in Argentina during the same period. ADL's reports on Arab League and PLO activities in Argentina offered an on-the-ground perspective that diplomatic traffic generally did not address. Separately, the United Nations archive contributed data concerning Argentina's participation in the General Assembly and Security Council activities, which proved useful for demonstrating the important shifts in the government's policies. This documentation revealed the influences of Arab lobbyists on Argentine positions related to the Arab-Israeli conflict. American newspapers, such as the *New York Times* and the *Dallas Morning News*, also contributed vital information that filled gaps leftover by U.S., Argentine, and United Nations materials.

At the time of the project, records on the Arab perspective were less accessible. The records of Arab delegations, the Arab League, and the PLO were extremely difficult to access due to regional security concerns and lack of proper maintenance. My efforts to access the Arab League archive in Cairo were unsuccessful. The local archivist told my associate, a local Egyptian, that the holdings were not government communications and the archive did not permit photography or photocopying. In short, I had no means by which to review the materials. I have instead worked to reconstruct the Arab perspective through reliable primary sources both in the United States and Argentina in hopes of countering the argument of international historians that dependence on Western sources has silenced and ignored the Arab perspective. In all, the



multiple research sites contributed a fuller picture of Argentine-Arab World relations in such a polarizing period.

## **Organization**

The project is laid out in chronological order with each chapter addressing the impact of the Middle East conflicts on Argentine foreign policy and society. This approach shows the trajectory and evolution of Argentine-Arab World relations and the impact on Argentine society. The Arab World, for the purposes here, refers to those countries in close proximity to Israel. Similarly, “Arab(s)” denotes those groups and individuals with a shared linguistic and cultural heritage but not necessarily religious homogeneity, whereas Jew(s) refers to peoples with shared religion and/or cultural background. Although Argentina had interactions with other Arab countries and even the greater Islamic World, this work is concerned primarily with Argentina’s diplomacy in Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia.

From Israeli statehood up through Perón’s third administration in the mid-1970s, Argentina faced domestic political turmoil, pressure from local Arab and Jewish groups, and a bevy of diplomatic scenarios. Chapter One retraces Argentina’s diplomatic strategies towards the Palestine dilemma and its relationship with allies in Arab League during the early years of the Cold War. In this period, the partition of Palestine emerged as defining international dilemma. Perón’s own third position policies and opportunities for expansion in the postcolonial Arab World inspired the government to support Arabs in the hotly contested partition vote. Argentina used the momentous occasion to suspend its past neutrality in international conflict for the sake of its budding relationship with the Arab World. Allying with the Arab World provided the outlet Perón needed from Cold War alignments and Argentina’s own political isolation in the

Western Hemisphere. The chapter documents how the relationship evolved in those years leading up to the pivotal partition vote, including interesting narratives on Arab League officials and Arab government representatives' solicitation of Argentine representatives during the voting process. Above all, the Palestine question acted as an accelerant for an already warming relationship between Argentina and the Arab World.

Chapter Two explores how Perón accompanied his nation's remarkable vote on the partition of Palestine with an equally remarkable outreach to the Arab World. Inspired by nonaligned policies and Argentina's positive standing in the Arab World, the Argentine government extended an unprecedented number of diplomatic invitations to multiple Arab nations in a short period of time. From 1947 to 1948, Argentina established relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and upgraded its missions to Syria and Lebanon. The chapter recounts Perón's unprecedented courting of the Arab World in arguably the most polarizing period in modern Middle East history. I argue that this story not only signaled Argentina's shift from a neutral observer to Third World champion, but also acted as the precursor to nonalignment. The chapter analyzes how Perón, although cautious not to jeopardize its precarious position with the First World, remained resistant to political alignment and demonstrated his commitment to the third position by aggressively building relationships throughout the Arab World.

In Chapter Three, I argue that 1949 proved to be the most pivotal year in Argentine relations with the Arab World. During twelve-month period, Argentine officials dispatched to the region found it in chaos. The Arab League's embarrassing defeat in the first conflict with the Israeli state left the Arab World in political turmoil. Infighting plagued the Arab League, and suspicions undermined hopes for pan-Arab cooperation. Moreover, the Cold War steadily

moved in through periods that appeared to be imperial re-intervention that directly influenced the Israel-Palestine conflict. Cold War competitors wittingly and unwittingly contributed to the political disarray through alliance building and political meddling. The dedication and intensity that had defined Argentina's early relationship to the Arab World now turned to restrained enthusiasm. Perón, still intent on pursuing third position strategies, tailored his approach to the Arab World by fostering relations with reformist Arab states, like Egypt and Syria, while deescalating relations with Saudi Arabia and refusing recognition of Jordan. The year 1949 further confirmed Perón's intentions for a nonaligned cause in the region even as Argentina proved more cautious towards the Palestine dilemma and with the Arab World as a whole.

Chapter Four examines the immediate consequences of Perón's unprecedented foreign policy with the Arab World and the outbreak of the 1956 Suez Canal Crisis. The once profound experiment in the Middle East began to lapse towards the end of Perón's reign, in part, due to economic decline and renewed reliance on the United States. Perón moved back and forth between accepting foreign investment and nonaligned rhetoric in an unsuccessful bid to maintain power and satisfy anti-alignment constituencies. Anti-Perónists forced him out in October 1955. The consequences of his diplomatic work became immediately apparent with the joint Israeli, French, and British invasion of invasion of Egypt in 1956. Under the new, anti-Perónist president Pedro Aramburu, Argentina became a center for the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, not only had Perón unwittingly allowed for Israeli and Arab interests to infiltrate the country and their constituent communities, his reorientation towards the United States helped to revive local nonaligned sentiments. The Suez Crisis further fueled ethnic strife as Arab and Israeli officials campaigned for the support of immigrant communities without much concern for the Argentine government. The internationalization of the conflict had taken such a

hold in Argentina that the country could not untangle itself from the conflict. The chapter demonstrates that Perón's legacy is far greater more complicated than a story of domestic reform. His legacy includes a unique foreign policy agenda tied to the Middle East that, purposefully and accidentally, transformed Argentine society. Perón's foreign policy decisions deserve more attention in Argentine historiography.

Chapter Five explains the influence Middle East politics in Argentina through three separate incidents: the 1960 Israeli capture of Nazi Adolf Eichmann, the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, and the reelection of Juan Perón in July 1973. First, the chapter explores how the kidnapping resulted from different themes in Argentine history converging at once. The kidnapping sparked increased domestic anti-Semitism and served as an impetus for coordination between nationalist forces and Arab League officials. The chapter briefly retraces the violence led by nationalists and pro-Catholic groups, like the *Tacuara*, turned on Jewish citizens and businesses in the wake of Eichmann's capture. In short, the Eichmann operation underscored how deeply Arab and Israeli interests had penetrated Argentine politics and society. The chapter then examines Argentina's position in the 1967 Six-Day War and the domestic consequences for the Latin American country. Cold War alignments grew more rigid in the wake of the conflict. As Soviets backed Arabs and the United States favored Israel, the Third World governments consolidated their power in the non-aligned movement and began to champion the Arab-Palestine cause. The war and the resulting alignments truly internationalized the conflict. The globalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict forced Argentina to choose between its economic dependence on the United States and its position as a Third World partner. I argue that the Argentine government failed in trying to find a middle ground, creating unprecedented hostility between Jewish and Arab interests in Argentina. Arab forces, in particular, capitalized on the

favorable political environment and the rise of anti-Semitism in Argentina. Juan Perón's return to power is the third and final illustration in the chapter. Argentina's slow drift to the left picked up speed with Perón's return to the presidency. The often neutral country was now an active participant in supporting the interests of its Arab allies. The Perón administration emerged as a vocal supporter of the Third World and the Palestinian movements. Perón's pronouncements would earn him titles and gifts from Arab leaders, some never before bestowed upon a Latin American president. Not only had Argentina become the center of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Latin America, it proved to be an Arab ally.

In the end, this project will expand the limited scholarship on Argentina's global influence during the Cold War and the impact of Middle East politics on local society, while also contributing to the larger body of Latin America's Cold War history. Argentina's story of diplomacy in the Middle East is a contribution to the de-centering movement in Cold War scholarship that seeks to "examine the sites of contact where encounters, conflicts, and exchanges" between ideologies, terror, and human and economic capital were produced.<sup>65</sup> The topic also draws our attention to the broader internationality of the Cold War and highlights the inescapable influence the Third World had in crafting its own agendas and shaping the time. To borrow from Paul Chamberlain, this work treats Third World agency "not as the background to the real drama unfolding in places such as Washington and Moscow but rather as an essential component of a genuinely international story."<sup>66</sup> Yet Argentina's story remains unique in its

<sup>65</sup> Gilbert Joseph has made decentering a popular theme in scholarship on Latin America's Cold War, see "Close Encounters: Towards a New Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, ed. Gilbert Joseph et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) 3-46; The quote comes from Ariel C. Armony, "Transnationalizing the Dirty War: Argentina in Central America," in *In From the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, eds. Gilbert Joseph et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 159; For another work championing the decentering process, see Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile & The Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

<sup>66</sup> Chamberlain, *The Global Offensive*, 7.

own right. The narrative simultaneously reflects larger historical patterns and contradicts them.  
For this reason, Argentina is a truly exceptional story.

## Chapter One: Argentina, the Arab World, and the Partition of Palestine 1946-1947

The Cold War in Europe began in earnest immediately following the close of the Second World War. To those involved in the transition, it became clear that Soviet and United States styles of governance were incompatible and beyond reconciliation. Europe's rebuilding process emerged as one of stark division. The ideological competition that ensued infiltrated all facets of life. The Cold War infused the life of Europe's inhabitants at every level: religious, cultural, and financial. While uncertainty hung like a dark cloud over post-war Europe, citizens faced new moral dilemmas concerning whether to adopt ideologies that had the power to transform and take over one's identity.

Some embraced Cold War competition over concerns of Nazi prosecution. Members of the fervently anti-Communist Catholic Church attempted to undermine Soviet ambitions by aiding and abetting fleeing Nazis. A number of Vatican officials strongly believed that stopping the spread of godless communism served a greater purpose than surrendering Christian Nazi criminals. Clergy members, like Bishop Alois Hudal, believed Europe desperately needed re-Christianization in the post-war era and chose rebaptism of escaped Nazi officials over surrendering them for prosecution<sup>67</sup> Likewise, fleeing Nazis became new sources of information for U.S. intelligence on Communist intentions. Washington believed some Nazis could prove valuable as covert informants on the threats emanating from the Soviet Union. U.S. Cold War doctrine overlooked Nazi war crimes in exchange for valuable intelligence. Essentially, ideological objectives "trumped post-war reckoning with Nazi crimes."<sup>68</sup> The

<sup>67</sup> Gerald Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run: How Hitler's Henchmen Fled Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 118-127; Uki Goni, *The Real Odessa: How Perón brought the Nazi War Criminals to Argentina* (London: Granta Publications, 2002), xxiii.

<sup>68</sup> Steinacher, *Nazis on the Run*, xxiv.

unyielding nature of the Cold War, not Europe's moral redemption, became the priority for many.

Zionism, which had been building for decades throughout Europe, found new life in this complicated postwar period. Zionists capitalized on allies' guilt for failing to respond quickly to Nazi atrocities and gained sympathy for a homeland. Zionists then used the emotional capital to build momentum behind the idea of a Jewish state. The movement found particular favor in democratic nations, including Great Britain, which in its quest to maintain its dominance in the Middle East unwittingly paved the way for a Jewish homeland.

As Zionism found footing in England, several high-profile Nazis made their escape to Argentina. Like those who overlooked Nazi crimes, President Juan Perón believed that the Nuremberg trials were a disgrace to the concept of military honor and a capitulation to Communist dictates. The Perón administration implemented a coordinated, transatlantic effort to facilitate the immigration of several high-level Nazi war criminals and provide them shelter in Argentina. Some of those with engineering expertise assisted in Argentina's military and industrial modernization efforts.<sup>69</sup> The Argentine government openly took exception to both Nazi prosecution and forced Cold War alignment, and as a result, invited fugitives of war, while spurning calls to align with Western democracies. Argentina played host to an atmosphere far more complicated than a mere battle between American democracy and Soviet Communism.

Argentina still had to navigate carefully the evolving and complex Cold War environment. Fervently anti-Communist and generally anti-American, Argentina had few options in the way of superpower alliances. However, unlike others in Latin America, Argentina had the capacity for self-reliance and a reputation for unilateral action. The Perón administration exemplified this attitude with its refusal to rescind Argentina's official neutrality during World

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 211-225.



War II until May 1945, two months before the war ended. The Argentine president, decades later, rejected notions that the eventual declaration of war had to do with accepting the moral superiority of the allied position. Instead, Perón called the move a “mere formality.”<sup>70</sup> Refusing to cede credit to the allies, Perón added in a separate statement two years later that his government “preferred to make the imperialist powers of the day believe we had finally given in to their belligerent requests.” The decision was a shallow performance of “good behavior” so that Argentina could “win time” in its secretive efforts to strengthen relations with post-war Germany.<sup>71</sup> Nevertheless, the delay had frustrated allied nations, undermined Argentina’s relationship with the United States, and led to accusations of Nazi collaboration. The Perón administration found itself largely isolated from the international community. Leading powers temporarily shunned Argentina from U.N. membership. Perón’s refusal to bow to foreign dictates, however, represented Argentina’s traditional “dogmatic, uncompromising attitude” towards its diplomacy.<sup>72</sup>

At the United Nations, Argentina favored legal precedent over political expediency. Argentine delegates on more than one occasion cast rather controversial votes that reflected the country’s intransigence towards any sort of international pressure. For example, during José Arce’s time as Argentine Ambassador from 1946-1949, the country did not vote on a censure of the South African government for its legalized, racial discrimination against Indian citizens. Delegates also refused to join with other Third World nations in support of Namibian independence from South Africa, support investigations into French colonial policy in Morocco,

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Felix Luna, *El 45* (Buenos Aires: Hyspamerica, 1984), 55.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Goni, *The Real Odessa*, 24.

<sup>72</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 23.

and criticize Dutch colonization in the Far East.<sup>73</sup> Despite pressure from some developing nations and superpowers alike, Argentina frequently exercised its doctrine of noninterference unless clear legal obligations demanded intervention. In perhaps the greatest moment in the history of United Nations deliberations, however, Argentina affirmed the Arab position on the partition of Palestine through an abstention in a remarkable reversal of policy.

Many scholars have glossed over the vote since it seemed to agree with Argentina's traditional position of neutrality in global affairs.<sup>74</sup> Ignacio Klich, who has studied the moment in-depth, concluded that the vote was unhelpful to both Arab and Zionist ambitions. Klich characterizes Argentina's position as an "unwillingness to take a stand on Palestine's future."<sup>75</sup> Yet, the resolution required affirmative votes to pass. Abstentions and *no's* were both harmful to hopes of a Jewish homeland. Therefore, the vote helped the Arab position. Moreover, Arab officials throughout the Arab World and Arab-Argentine communities celebrated the vote as a confirmation of Perón's pro-Arab position in the Palestine dilemma. Arabs' reaction and Argentina's unusually intimate rapport with the Arab World during the partition process leave little doubt that abstention served as an affirmation of the Arab cause. The decision also proved foundational to Arab-Argentine diplomacy.

Scholarship continues to focus on Africa and the Far East as the breeding ground for Third World movement. Likewise, Egyptian president Gamal Abdul Nassar, Indian Prime

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 24; Sergio Bagú, *Argentina en el mundo* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1971), 105-106; Gustavo Ferrari, *Esquema de la política exterior argentina* (Buenos Aires: Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1981), 1-28.

<sup>74</sup> Benny Morris reveals that Zionists conceded Argentina to the Arab side before the vote but does not explain how the Jewish lobby came to that conclusion in *1948: A History of the Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 54. Edward Glick offers a brief analysis arguing that the Arab-Argentine communities pressured Argentina into a neutral vote, but avoids a deeper analysis on the vote in *Latin America and the Palestine Problem* (New York: Theodor Herzl. Foundation, 1958), 113.

<sup>75</sup> Ignacio Klich, "Equidistance and Gradualism in Argentine Foreign Policy Towards Israel and the Arab World, 1949-1955," in *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies on History and Literature*, eds. David Sheinin and Lois Baer Barr (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 220.

Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and the 1955 Bandung Conference maintain their positions of prominence in the history of nonalignment.<sup>76</sup> This work does not necessarily contest those conclusions, but rather aims to demonstrate that the intellectual and practical application of nonalignment began years earlier in a region rarely associated with the movement. Perón then took action against the Cold War system by building cooperation among the Arab World years before the nonaligned movement. Employing his famous third position in the Middle East, a notion rooted in feelings of anti-imperialism and concepts of nonalignment, seemed all the more certain after the United States and the Soviet Union both decided to support a Zionist homeland. The move emboldened Perón to move forward with his agenda. This history suggests that some of the first instances of Third World cooperation originated in Latin America. Argentina's abstention represented a broader reimagining of the country's foreign policy that included not only a break from traditional neutrality but an unprecedented move towards the Arab World, a move that acted as a precursor to non-alignment.

## **Immigration**

Argentina was perhaps the most uniquely equipped to manage this endeavor. A rich immigrant legacy provided the South American country with opportunities on the international stage. A British presence in Buenos Aires, which began during the colonial period, evolved into a transnational bond that led to robust economic exchange by the late nineteenth century. The British invested millions in Argentina's agricultural infrastructure and reaped the rewards as a

<sup>76</sup> For one of the most recent works on the non-aligned movement, see Natasa Miskovic, Harald Fischer-Tiné, and Nada Boskovska, eds., *The Non-Aligned Movement and the Cold War: Delhi-Bandung-Belgrade* (New York: Routledge, 2014); Robert B. Rakove reexamines the intent behind U.S. policy towards the movement during the Cold War, but bases his conclusions on the 1950s and 1960s with little attention paid to Latin America, see *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Non-Aligned Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); See also Philip F. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

major importer of Argentine meat and grain. Argentina's rich German and Italian heritage also laid the foundation for diplomatic relations throughout Europe.<sup>77</sup> Argentina had well-established connections from its earliest days. Argentina's prominence on the global stage, however, was not entirely dependent on its European relationships. Perhaps the most overlooked aspect of Argentina's international network involved its Middle East associations. Mass immigration by Arab and Jewish peoples into Argentina in the first half of the twentieth-century linked Argentina to the region early on. This largely unknown story created an unbreakable link to the Middle East.

Argentina's history of immigration gave it a reputation as a cultural melting pot. Arab immigrants from Lebanon and Syria comprised a significant portion of new arrivals coming during and after World War I. The political turmoil in the Ottoman Empire sparked a massive exodus of Arabs, both Christian and Muslim. Escaping refugees spoke of religious persecution (for Christians namely), military conscription, overpopulation, and famine.<sup>78</sup> The arriving Arabs, settled alongside an equally a large Jewish population escaping persecution and economic stagnation in the Ottoman territories and Eastern Europe. By the turn of the twentieth century, Argentina possessed one of the largest Arab and Jewish communities in Latin America.

The largest number of Arab immigrants came in the first ten years of the twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> A 1909 Argentine immigration report noted the arrival of approximately 11,765 Syrian-Arabs. Of the group, over half -- approximately 6,000 -- were "Mohammadans" or Muslims, which at the time made Argentina the home of the largest Muslim population in Latin

<sup>77</sup> Rock, *Argentina*, 40-50.

<sup>78</sup> Theresa Alfaro Velcamp "The Historiography of Arab Immigration to Argentina: The Intersection of the Imaginary and the Real Country" in *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America*, eds. Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey Lesser (Routledge: New York, 1998), 227-248.

<sup>79</sup> Michael Humphrey "Ethnic History, Nationalism and Transnationalism" in *Arab and Jewish Immigrants in Latin America*, eds. Ignacio Klich and Jeffrey Lesser (Routledge: New York, 1998), 167-188.

America.<sup>80</sup> The report noted that Muslim immigrants, in particular, did “very little toward practicing their religion in the new surroundings.”<sup>81</sup> The influx of Arabs from heavily Christianized areas of Lebanon and Syria and their subdued religiosity likely contributed to notions that Christians were the majority of these Arab immigrants. However, immigrant groups in all likelihood were split almost evenly between Muslims and Christians.<sup>82</sup> This is an important truth in light of the evidence that suggests Arabs and Jews lived peaceably together in Argentina in the early years of the twentieth century. In fact, their simultaneous immigration forged social and economic alliances between the two groups.

Shunned from the public square by Argentine cultural purists who favored European-Catholics, Jewish and Arab immigrants turned to entrepreneurial activities and quickly developed an intimate network of commercial associations. Operating in similar economic sectors, such as silk and textile production, proved useful for protecting and growing immigrant-owned businesses. These business alliances naturally manifested themselves in local financial institutions, such as the Syrian-Lebanese Bank, founded by both Jews and Arabs. The interdependence led to financial success for many Arab and Jewish business owners. Yet the mutual reliance extended far beyond the business sector. Arab and Jewish civic associations frequently cooperated on Middle East issues. Some of these civic organizations worked together to assist fellow immigrants with their transition out of the Middle East and into Argentina. In other cases, both groups came together to challenge European occupation in the region. In a

<sup>80</sup> U.S. Department of State. “Immigration Report - 1909,” *Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations Between the United States and Argentina, 1910-1929*, (Washington D.C.: CPO).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Michael Humphrey argues against the notion that most of the Arabs arriving in Argentina were Christians escaping Ottoman persecution. This, he believes, is a misleading characterization of Arab immigrants to Argentina since approximately half of those in question were Muslim. For more detailed explanation see “Ethnic History, Nationalism and Transnationalism in Argentine Arab and Jewish Cultures” in Klich and Lesser, 167-188. For opposing views on the makeup of Arab immigrants to Argentina, see Theresa Alfaro Velcamp “The Historiography of Arab Immigration to Argentina: The Intersection of the Imaginary and the Real Country” in Klich and Lesser, 227-248.

powerful instance of unity, members from local Arab and Jewish civic groups spoke out against the French government in the early 1940s, which appeared to be stalling troop withdrawals from the Levant after lifting its Mandate in 1943. This cooperation led to the creation of the Central Aid Committee for Syria and Lebanon one year later, intended to provide assistance to victims of French occupation in the Middle East and to offer political and financial support for the rebuilding process. The associations also boasted multi-ethnic memberships. Many organizations had a surprising number of Jewish and Arab (both Christian and Muslim) members. Jews served alongside Arabs on the executive committee of the popular Syrian-Lebanese Welfare Society. Records also demonstrate that Jewish businessmen served in multiple leadership positions in the prominent Syro-Lebanese Chamber of Commerce in 1929.<sup>83</sup> Entering the 1940s, the Jewish and Arab communities boasted a history of economic and cultural success in Argentina based on strong economic and civic cooperation. Economic and cultural commonalities, however, were not the only factors driving Arab and Jewish cooperation.

The threat posed by Argentine nationalists and overt government discrimination played a crucial role bringing together these two groups. The Argentine government considered both Arabs and Jews ethnically undesirable. Although Argentina relied on immigrants for its turn-of-the-century modernization efforts, Arab and Jewish immigrants did not fit the government's desired nationality. The state considered each to be industrially or economically disadvantageous, unlike Italian and German immigrants. Many officials felt Jews and Arabs threatened Argentina's ethnic and religious homogeneity with their alien cultural, religious, and

<sup>83</sup> For information on these early local relationships, see Ignacio Klich, "Arab and Jewish Co-existence in the First Half of 1900s: Overcoming Self-Imposed Amnesia" in Klich and Lesser, 1-37; *Delegacion de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas*, "Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentine" (Buenos Aires: DAIA, 1958), 7. (Hereafter DAIA).

linguistic practices.<sup>84</sup> Arabs and Jews were “stigmatized as unproductive and parasitic.”<sup>85</sup> Local Argentines dubbed those arriving from Ottoman territories “*turcos*,” which immediately took on a pejorative meaning. Although Argentine Muslims had a particularly tough time dealing with cultural prejudice amidst a predominately Hispanic-Christian population, groups like the popular nationalist movement, known for its rabid anti-Semitism and veneration of Catholic-European settlers, rarely distinguished between Arab and Jews in its discriminatory pronouncements. The political movement would later spawn violent splinter groups like the *Tacuara*, famous for its anti-Semitic attacks in the 1960s.<sup>86</sup>

The Argentine government’s modernization efforts and nationalists’ nativist ideals created hostility towards “*turcos*,” leaving them “at the bottom of the Argentine social hierarchy.”<sup>87</sup> Arab and Jews’ shared stigmatization and experience in similar business sectors fostered a sense of interdependence and cooperation. According to scholar Ignacio Klich, this visible solidarity remained largely intact in spite of Zionism and its influence within Argentine-Jewish communities.<sup>88</sup> Evidence prior to the creation of Israel suggests that Arabs -- both Christian and Muslim -- displayed little discernible ill will towards the Zionist movement. In the late 1930s, Arabs appeared less concerned the growing conflict between Zionist settlers and Arabs living in Mandate Palestine than their own issues at home. This environment changed

<sup>84</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*; Velcamp “The Historiography of Arab Immigration to Argentina: The Intersection of the Imaginary and the Real Country”; Humphrey, “Ethnic History, Nationalism and Transnationalism”; Klich, “Self-Imposed Amnesia”; For discussions on discrimination, see Ronald Newton, “German Nazism and the Origins of Argentine Anti-Semitism,” in *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies on History and Literature*, eds. David Sheinin and Lois Baer Barr (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 199-218; Silvia Schenkolewski Kroll, “Zionist Political Parties in Argentina From the Revolution of 1943 to the Establishment of the State of Israel,” in *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America: New Studies on History and Literature*, eds. David Sheinin and Lois Baer Barr (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 239-250.

<sup>85</sup> Klich, “Self-Imposed Amnesia,” 14.

<sup>86</sup> Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 208-210.

<sup>87</sup> Humphrey, “Ethnic History, Nationalism and Transnationalism,” 168.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 1; Raanan Rein retraces the political and economic support of Argentine-Jews for the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine, arguing that these Argentine communities were “involved and interested in the struggle over the establishment of the State of Israel,” in *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 71.

with the internationalization of the partition debate. By the 1940s, the cordial and cooperative relationship between the Jews and Arabs deteriorated. The growing conflict over Palestine divided the two communities. Suspicion and animosity replaced the cooperative efforts that for years had defined their relationship. What Klich calls a “self-imposed amnesia” all but erased the earlier record of cooperation.<sup>89</sup> Interaction only worsened once Argentine government showed interest in Middle East affairs.

Argentina possessed minimal political or financial interests in the Middle East leading up to the Cold War. Unlike its European relationships, Middle East countries had a small part in Argentina’s foreign policies. Then, the government abruptly changed its position during the first year of Perón’s administration. The newly elected President wasted little time in pursuing Arab countries. Perón sent word to a “reputed Arab leader” in Argentina, Dr. Rafael Laoud, requesting that he carry messages to the Arab leaders in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, conveying the president elect’s wish to see active political and economic cooperation between Argentina and the Arab World.<sup>90</sup> Dr. Laoud responded favorably and departed for Beirut on April 19, 1946, two months before Perón officially took office. U.S. Embassy officials in Buenos Aires interpreted the revelation as “a possibility that Argentina [was] interested in establishing in the United Nations a small block of Arab and American states.”<sup>91</sup> The American conclusion reflected the reality of the moment. The end of World War II and the end of the colonial era had given way to the creation of nation-states throughout the Middle East region. Perón’s sudden interest in the Arab World suggested he saw an opportunity to challenge the Cold War order and implement his third position plan through a coalition of Arab states. This

<sup>89</sup> Klich, “Self-Imposed Amnesia,” 1; Mirelman, “Attitude Towards Jews in Argentina,” 213.

<sup>90</sup> John Cabot to the Secretary of State, April 20 1946, US Embassy in Buenos Aires; Classified General Records, 1936 - 1961; Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.



coalition provided Argentina's outlet from political isolation within the hemisphere and a chance to expand its presence globally. In summary, the Middle East served Argentina's need for a relevance somewhere between U.S. hegemony and its ambition for a prominent international role.

### **Domestic connections and government opinion**

Geopolitical opportunities were not the sole reason for Argentina's sudden interest in the Arab World. The Perón administration had many Argentine-Arabs within its ranks. Dr. Laoud, the man responsible for transmitting Perón's request to Arab leaders immediately after his election victory, had served as a high-level government official. Perónist Leónidas Vicente Saade, another influential figure, served as a senator in the national parliament and had strong ties to the Arab community of Catamarca Province. Interestingly, Saade was also the brother of Antonio Saade, the Syrian patriot who fled to Argentina to escape French arrest. His brother eventually returned to Syria after the French exit in 1946 and founded the dominant Syrian Social National Party (SSNP).<sup>92</sup> Likewise, Arabs and those of Arab descent made up a large portion of the parliamentary body from Santiago de Estero province. Observers at the time quipped that officials should change the language of the province to reflect the enormous Arab influence. Arab-Argentines' political involvement in Perón's government resulted in his favorable standing within those communities. In fact, in August 1946, the *Sociedad Siria Yabrudense*, a popular Arab-Argentine civic association, presented Perón with the gold plaque to

<sup>92</sup> "Solicitud de amparo para la señora Julieta Elmir viuda Saade," July 16 - November 7, 1949, División de Política, Syria, Box 49, Folder "Provisorio," *Archivo del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto*, Buenos Aires, (Hereafter AMREC).

honor his election victory.<sup>93</sup> Prominent non-Arabs among Perón's most trusted advisors also held high opinions of Arabs.

Perón and several of his advisors made known on many occasions their affinity for the Arab-Argentine community and the Arab World. Immigration advisor, Santiago Peralta, was a dedicated supporter of the Arab community and pushed for greater outreach to local Arabs and the Arab World. In certain instances, Peralta encouraged Arab immigration to Argentina by giving families land to settle. He did so while also instituting measures that prevented Jewish immigration. He was so supportive of the Arab community that the *Perónist* once stated that the only thing missing in his friendship with Arabs was that he “was no[t] Moslem himself.”<sup>94</sup> He along with the Argentine Ambassador to the United Nations, José Arce, regularly took to the international stage to praise the Arab-Argentine community and the whole of the Arab World. Perón himself expressed both an affinity towards the Arabs and disdain for Jewish groups. In 1943, Perón penned a handful of secret reports to his revolutionary compatriots within the United Officers Group (GOU), in which he spoke of a shadowy Jewish-Communist conspiracy that, he argued, remained an ever-present threat to Argentine sovereignty.<sup>95</sup> In a cultural observation a few years later, Perón commented that the Arabs were “Perónist at heart,” whereas the Jews had contributed to Argentine society only “out of self-interest.” Arabs “adapt more easily, they grow roots, they meld into the culture,” he said, while the Jew is always “a stranger, he doesn't integrate.”<sup>96</sup> As these statements revealed, many of the same people who held pro-Arab tendencies also harbored deep anti-Semitic sentiments.

<sup>93</sup> DAIA, “Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentine,” 6.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>95</sup> Goni, *The Real Odessa*, 38.

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in Torcuato Luca de Tena, Luis Calvo, Esteban Peicovich, eds. *Yo, Juan Domingo Perón: relato autobiográfico* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 1976), 88-91.

The coup that brought the GOU to power and Perón into government in 1943 also carried with it continued concerns about Jewish influence on Argentine society. Internal memos circulated among GOU leadership following the coup claimed to have linked the United States and Communists with a Jewish espionage network designed to undermine the Argentine government. The memos went as far as recommending the removal of a Jewish official in the government.<sup>97</sup> Perón's involvement in perpetuating notions of Jewish threats while in the GOU subsided after his election victory. Once in power, Perón held fast to his well-known tactic of public impartiality. However, several major figures in his government only intensified their anti-Semitic rhetoric. Education Minister Gustavo Martínez Surviría was a notable and rather vocal opponent of Jewish people. Surviría became a best-selling author with a host of anti-Semitic publications penned under an assumed name, Hugo West.<sup>98</sup> The aforementioned Santiago Peralta was yet another. His glowing opinions of the Arab communities were only outdone by his slander of the Jewish people whom he called a "parasitic plant," only out to "exploit the...Argentine people."<sup>99</sup> This virulent strand of anti-Semitism also ran through the popular nationalist movement, whose members found a rapport with Perón early on in his political career. On more than one occasion during Perón's election campaign, nationalist supporters rioted in Jewish neighborhoods of Buenos Aires, causing damage to homes and inflicting injuries on numerous residents. One reporter noted that "all rallies in support of Colonel Perón involved some expression of anti-Semitism."<sup>100</sup>

Since such an atmosphere characterized the GOU's rise to power, it came as little surprise when the Perón administration maintained an especially harsh policy against Jewish

<sup>97</sup> Robert Potash, *Perón y el G.O.U.: los documentos de una logia secreta* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana imp. 1984).

<sup>98</sup> Goni, *The Real Odessa*, 38.

<sup>99</sup> Santiago Peralta, *influencia del pueblo árabe en la Argentina: apuntes sobre inmigración* (Buenos Aires: Sociedad Impresora Americana, 1946) 69, 296, and 307.

<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Rein, *Argentina, Israel and the Jews*, 38.

immigration during World War II, known as Directive 11. The policy dictated that Argentine representatives, particularly those in Europe, should refuse visas for Jews seeking passage to Argentina. The Argentine government instructed its officials stationed in Europe to forward all requests directly to Buenos Aires. In some cases, wealthy Jews bribed their way into Argentina, but many could not. Interestingly, German officials occasionally offered to return Argentine-Jews found in Europe, but Nazi officials often encountered a Perón administration uninterested in repatriating its citizens. On more than one occasion, Argentina officials simply dithered or never followed-up on German notifications.<sup>101</sup> The sensibilities of those toward Arabs and Jews portended Argentina's stance in the Palestine debate. Broader still, the growing interconnectedness of the Cold War and the Palestine dilemma would encourage Perón's inclination toward the Arab World.

### **The Palestine Dilemma**

Remnants of imperialism, post-war disorder, and ideas of nationalism all finally collided in the Middle East in the early 1940s. Zionist and Arab nationalist aspirations, overlaid by the consequences of the Holocaust and European occupation, set the stage for conflict. By the mid-1940s, violence was commonplace in the British Mandate for Palestine. Zionist settlers, local Arabs, and resident British forces engaged in a convoluted and vicious cycle of attack and reprisal. Unable or unwilling to deter the violence, the British cabinet decided to “dump the problem in the lap” of the United Nations. The crown officially transferred the mandate authority to the United Nations on February 14, 1947 and later announced the complete withdrawal its forces by May 15, 1948.<sup>102</sup> The U.N.'s assumption of all legal authority officially

<sup>101</sup> Goni, *The Real Odessa*, 31-37.

<sup>102</sup> Morris, 1948, 37.

brought the Palestine question to the international community and forever changed the dispute from a regional issue to a global one.

The Palestine question, as the United Nations called it, came at an interesting time for Latin America. Prior to U.N. expansion from sixty to eighty members in 1957, Latin America represented the largest voting bloc in the U.N. general assembly.<sup>103</sup> Since U.N. resolutions required a two-thirds majority, Latin America emerged as a major target of Arab and Jewish lobbying. These efforts faced an uphill battle in Argentina, where a type of isolationism and non-interference remained central tenets to its foreign policy. Moreover, Argentina had no strategic interests in the Middle East outside of private missions to Saudi Arabia and Iraq prior to 1947.<sup>104</sup> However, after World War II, Argentina and the Arab World both needed allies.

Argentina was attacked from multiple fronts by those who sought to exclude it from international participation largely on account of its war-time record. The Soviets had pushed to exclude Argentina from international participation as a penance for perceived Nazi collaboration. Relations with the United States remained particularly strained throughout the 1940s. The caustic Argentine-U.S. relationship was on full display at the United Nations. The heated rhetoric between the two reached scalding levels in late 1947 during the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment in Havana, where a U.S.-supported draft charter for the International Trade Organization infuriated leading Argentine public figure Diego Luís Molinari. He lambasted the proposal's celebration of capitalism, referring to the U.S. system as one run by "shylocks squeezing the heart of hungry multitudes."<sup>105</sup> In the end, Argentina and Poland stood alone as the only two nations to reject the Havana Charter. Representatives had "staked out

<sup>103</sup> United Nations, "Member States," available at <http://www.un.org/en/members/growth.shtml>. Accessed on September 26, 2014.

<sup>104</sup> Klich "Towards an Arab-Latin American Bloc?," 550-553.

<sup>105</sup> Russell Porter, "Argentina Rejects ITO Draft Charter," *New York Times*, December 3, 1947.

afresh their anti-United States position.”<sup>106</sup> Argentina’s belligerence towards U.S. positions at the United Nations reflected the volatility in their state-to-state relations.

The U.S. government had embargos in place as a penalty for the military coup of 1943. The American government expanded those embargos to include commercial and diplomatic stoppages in the face of Argentina’s refusal to declare war on the axis-powers. At the same moment, the U.S. government reached agreements with Brazil on new arms deals, which angered an Argentine government already suffering from American economic isolation and fearful of the militarization of a rival neighbor. Assistant U.S. Secretary of State Spruille Braden harbored particularly hostile feelings towards Argentina. During his stint as Ambassador to Argentina, Braden frequently interfered in Argentine politics and openly accused Perón of pro-Axis tendencies and anti-United Nations sentiments. Perón exploited his nation’s anti-Americanism by using Braden’s published opinions for political advantage and won the presidential election on the back of his now-famous slogan: *Braden o Perón*.<sup>107</sup> In this atmosphere, Perón believed the Arab World suited his non-alignment objectives. Garnering Arab support became the priority.

### *Argentine-Arab World diplomacy*

The unprecedented cooperation between two major regions of the Third World began immediately after the end of World War II. The courting process started in 1945 during meetings at the United Nations Conference on International Organization, the precursor to the United Nations. Arab nations – those represented in the Arab League - and Argentina found that they could benefit from each other’s situation and worked together to strengthen their respective

<sup>106</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 468-469.

<sup>107</sup> Rein, *The Franco-Perón Alliance*, 22.

international positions. The earliest results of the newfound working relationship came when Arab nations backed Argentina's bid for U.N. membership. Although Arab petitioning initially failed, the actions forged a bond that only strengthened after Argentina's acceptance in 1945. Another instance of cooperation quickly followed with Arab nations' assistance to Argentina's bid for election to the International Court of Justice and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Two years later, in September 1947, Argentina once again received the support of Arab nations, this time for a position on the U.N. Security Council. Arab backing proved successful as "Argentina's bid for membership in the Security Council was due, in part, to the Arab countries' support."<sup>108</sup> Argentina would later return the favor by offering support to Syria in its bid for the presidency of the General Assembly's administrative committee and the Security Council, and extended the same support to Lebanon in the hopes of winning a seat on the ECOSOC.<sup>109</sup>

The relationship appeared solid leading up to the U.N. assumption of the Palestine Mandate. Immediately after the United Nations began hearings on the issue, Arab states requested the international organization promptly declare the independence of Palestine. Arab states hoped that quick legal recognition would undermine Zionists' stalling tactics, designed to amass a larger population and obtain additional material support. A sub-committee brought the Arab request to a vote in the General Assembly on May 1, 1947. At this assembly, Argentina provided some of its strongest support, to date, for its Arab allies. Argentina, along with fourteen other member nations, voted in favor of the Arab proposal. Ultimately, the Arab request failed, but the first vote on the Palestine question underscored Argentina's inclination

<sup>108</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 5.

<sup>109</sup> Klich "Towards an Arab-Latin American Bloc?," 552; Rein *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 4-5.

towards the Arab World. Arab failures to win independence now left Palestine's fate in the hands of the Political Committee and the General Assembly.<sup>110</sup>

During discussions on the formation of the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), particularly whether non-governmental bodies could participate in the debate, Argentina once again helped Arab and openly resisted U.S. pressure. Non-governmental agencies' presence at the UNSCOP meetings required approval from committee members. Arab states had already received approval to act as representatives for Palestinian Arabs during the forum, but the Jews had no similar delegation. Therefore, the Jewish Agency for Palestine – the acting authority in Palestine and the lobbying arm of the World Zionist Organization – requested the right to represent the Jews in Palestine. As a committee member, the United States flatly refused. In spite of U.S. disapproval, Argentina proposed a resolution that allowed for representation at committee meetings and ultimately voted in favor of Jewish representation through the Agency.<sup>111</sup> The United States, having failed to prevent the presence of a Jewish delegation, moved ahead with proposals designed to prohibit Palestinians (Arabs and Jews) from voicing their grievances during the committee conferences. In essence, the representatives would listen but could not participate. Argentina again balked and led a successful effort to defeat the U.S.-sponsored measure.<sup>112</sup> While helpful to Jewish representations, Argentina's move was vital to the Arab High Committee since it was the only non-governmental body made up of and representing Palestinian Arabs.

Argentina continued to champion Palestinian issues at the United Nations in remarkable fashion with a resolution that proposed the establishment “of a committee of inquiry with broad

<sup>110</sup> Thomas Hamilton, “Compromise Fails: Arabs Cling to the Right to Ask the Assembly Itself to Back Plan,” *New York Times*, May 1, 1947.

<sup>111</sup> Glick, *Latin America and the Palestine Problem*, 48-49.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*



powers” towards resolving the dilemma. Argentine delegates suggested that the body consist of five superpowers and six other states. The United States proposed a similar committee, but one comprised of “a small number of states not directly interested in the Palestine Problem.”<sup>113</sup> Argentina disliked the U.S. proposal. The Perón administration as the self-proclaimed anti-thesis to superpowers, ironically favored First World leadership on the committee over smaller states. Argentina essentially opposed a United States plan that might have gained favor with those developing countries sympathetic to Perón’s third position agenda. A short time later, Argentine delegates recognized that their unrelenting opposition to American positions had gone too far. Argentina suddenly reversed its stance, the speed of which surprised some on the committee.<sup>114</sup> The abrupt shift corrected what otherwise continued to be hostile policy towards the United States. This one committee meeting, however, paled in comparison to the upcoming discussions at the U.N. on the Palestine dilemma.

In broader terms, UNSCOP’s task of satisfying the growing chorus of conflicting interests, from Zionist immigrants and local Arabs to European imperialists and Cold War enemies, seemed an insurmountable task. The British had lost considerable ground after relinquishing their imperial authority. The mandate, once intended to undermine a pan-Arab movement and offer a buffer between British assets in Egypt and the French in Syria, had become a partition debate.<sup>115</sup> The Crown feared the complete loss of power in the region. Emerging Cold War realities also left the United States resistant to any U.N.-sponsored plan that facilitated Russian entry into the Middle East. For Argentina, the Cold War atmosphere and the Palestine dilemma actually accelerated its diplomatic efforts in the region from cursory

<sup>113</sup> U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. *The second annual report on the activities of the United Nations and the participation of the United States therein covering the calendar year 1947*, 80<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., February 23, 1948 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1948), 45.

<sup>114</sup> Glick, *Latin America and the Palestine Problem*, 54-55.

<sup>115</sup> Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, 104-120.

involvement to active engagement. The cross-section of multiple opportunities that included Third World advancement, international autonomy, and Cold War prestige inspired Perón's newfound interest. And this interest came at a perfect time for Palestinian advocates in Argentina.

### **Arab campaigning in Latin America**

Aside from Argentina's own national interests, the atmosphere in broader Latin America provided Arab lobbyists with a receptive audience. Benny Morris describes the region as flush with anti-Zionist sentiment. The Vatican held considerable power in Latin America and opposed partition and Jewish statehood. These anti-Zionist influences not only impacted large, European-immigrant communities, but also reflected a history of prejudice regarding the Jews. Likewise, a large Arab populace added to the number of potential anti-Zionist thinkers. Together with the palpable "anti-American feeling," Morris writes, the region appeared ready to support the Arab cause.<sup>116</sup> One could very well use Morris's descriptions to describe Argentina.<sup>117</sup> With a history of "defying" the United States, a reverence for Vatican policy, and one of the largest Arab populations in Latin America, Argentina became a principle target of Arab lobbyists.

The Arab League recognized the urgency that came with the U.N.'s assumption of authority over Palestine. In response, Arab representatives took a particular interest in Argentina and launched an aggressive campaign to win over the South American government. Arab officials from various nations stationed in Buenos Aires began lobbying the Argentine government for immediate diplomatic relations with Syria and Lebanon in the wake of each

<sup>116</sup> Morris, 1948, 54.

<sup>117</sup> Morris statement, while generically true, did not completely apply to Argentina. Anti-Zionism tended to rest with the Nationalist, pro-Catholic movement which was not in power.

country's independence from French occupation.<sup>118</sup> After all, Latin America could likely relate to the Arabs' plight, having dealt with its own forms of foreign hegemony. Pro-Arab Argentine Ambassador to the United Nations José Arce suggested as much to the U.N. Security Council in 1946, characterizing the Syro-Lebanese demands for freedom from French and British occupation as a justifiable response based on a shared sense of national pride.<sup>119</sup> Then in 1947, a Lebanese diplomat, who would later make the first Arab public relations tour in Latin America, met with newly elected President Juan Perón to request the government's support for the Arab position in the upcoming U.N. vote on Palestine. According to newspaper accounts, Perón suggested to his guest that Argentina's position was decided and that his country remained sympathetic to the Arab cause.<sup>120</sup>

Despite the assurances, Palestinian supporters continued to push. The next task involved mobilizing the large Arab-Argentine community. An Arab League delegation led by well-known Palestinian activist Akram Zuaytir visited Argentina in 1947 in hopes of organizing the local Arab-Argentine population into a formidable, pro-Palestinian lobby. In a few short months, Zuaytir and others successfully marshaled enough support to establish the Argentine Arab Committee for the Defense of Palestine. The organization called for an assembly of other Arab-Argentine groups in order to coordinate Arab actions for defending Palestine.<sup>121</sup> The committee demonstrated its effectiveness in centralizing and mobilizing the Arab-Argentine communities. Meanwhile, the Panarabic Congress in America garnered international notoriety as a self-declared wing of the Arab League in South America. The Congress announced in 1946 that as a proponent of Palestine sovereignty, the organization rejected United States' recommendations

<sup>118</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 10.

<sup>119</sup> José Arce, *Right Now* (Madrid: Blass, 1951), 97.

<sup>120</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 10; One must keep in mind that Perón gave similar assurances to Zionist delegates.

<sup>121</sup> DAIA, "Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentine," 12.

“for [the] entry of one hundred thousand European citizens of Hebrew religion to Palestine.” The Congress reiterated its calls of sovereignty later that year arguing that Zionist immigration created financial problems “of dire consequence for the Arabs of Palestine” and criticized Zionists’ statesmanship contending that the British forfeiture of Palestine was not a Jewish or Zionist problem “but merely [an] Arab [one].”<sup>122</sup> The group then turned its attention to the Argentine government. In October, Panarabic Congress sent letters to parliament members requesting they vote down a measure that called for the Argentine government to recognize a Jewish National Homeland in the Holy Land. The Congress stated that such a bill would go against Argentina’s long-held belief that nations and people had the right to self-determination.<sup>123</sup> The Congress represented one example of the international Arab influence in Argentina during Perón’s first two years in office. Efforts on the part of international Arab organizations helped to bring the conflict to forefront of Argentine politics and society. There were also equally effective, local Arab organizers.

Some among the Arab communities had already begun grass-roots efforts to lobby the Argentine government.<sup>124</sup> Local Arab leader, Elías Richa, had for years played a prominent role as a political mediator between Arab community and the Perón Administration. As a spokesman for the Central Arab Committee for Aid to Palestine, Richa led multiple campaigns designed to pressure the Argentine government into voting against the partition of Palestine. Ibrahim Hallar, director of the National Arab Library, was also involved in the local resistance to Zionism. Hallar served as a chief organizer for visits of Arab dignitaries to Argentina. In 1947, Hallar welcomed members of the Arab States for Palestine and shuttled them to important cities

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ignacio Klich, “Arabes, judíos y árabes judíos en la argentina de la primera mitad del novecientos,” *Estudios Interdisciplinarios de América Latina y el Caribe* 6, No. 2 (1995): 109-143.

throughout the country to elicit support from Arab communities. That same year, Hallar welcomed the U.N. vice-chairman of the press subcommittee and leading member of the Arab League, Mahmoud Azmi Bey, to Buenos Aires for a high-profile visit that received attention from the local press. In Perón's first year of office alone, groups like the Syrian-Lebanese club, Honor and Patria, and the Lebanese Patriotic Association garnered national recognition for their work in support of Palestinian Arabs.<sup>125</sup> Both local Arab organizers and Arab officials abroad represented an important political force leading up the partition vote.

Perón and his administration had long recognized the domestic-international connections and the consequences of the upcoming votes at the United Nations. In a revealing statement in 1946, Perón privately informed the Argentine delegation to the U.N. that on the question of Palestine "Argentina does not want a cooling off of its relations with the Arab League in any respect whatsoever. Argentina has not undertaken to support the Jews."<sup>126</sup> Perón remained steadfast in preserving Argentine autonomy and ensured his third position agenda emphasized national interests above all else. Those interests involved supporting the Arab World, a decidedly different approach than many leading superpowers.

### **Argentina and the Partition Vote**

The Arab World gladly accepted Perón's reassurances of loyalty, but words did not necessarily equate to a guaranteed vote in favor of Arab-Palestinians. In fact, Argentine representatives remained undecided on their position expressing concern over the unknown consequences that would be tied to its final vote. After all, the partition solution would

<sup>125</sup> DAIA, "Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentine," 10-11.

<sup>126</sup> Juan Perón, "Secreto – Para agregar a las instrucciones que posee actualmente la delegación argentina ante asamblea general de las Naciones Unidas," October 10, 1947, Juan Atilio Bramuglia papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, California (Hereafter JAB).

inevitably leave one party disadvantaged and possibly lead to domestic conflict. The debates reached the highest levels of the Argentine government. From the outset of his appointment in 1946, Argentine Ambassador to the United Nations José Arce expressed misgivings about the Zionist cause and the U.N.'s authority to even enforce a partition. These misgivings had roots in the Ambassador's feelings towards Arabs, such as those expressed on one occasion in which he referred to the Arab League as "the most loyal friend [Argentina] has."<sup>127</sup> Arce went so far as to openly challenge his de facto rival, Argentine Foreign Minister Juan Atilio Bramuglia, who largely supported the partition. Arce argued that the U.N. partition plans contradicted the U.N.'s own charter, which expressly stated that self-determination was left up to the nation state. He then suggested that the inhabitants of Palestine should hold a U.N. supervised vote on the situation. Scholar Raanan Rein points out that Arce's proposal "amounted to recommending the adoption of the Arab viewpoint, since the Arabs constituted the majority of the population."<sup>128</sup>

Arce also denounced Zionist contentions that linked Palestine with Holocaust refugees. The Argentine Ambassador believed that the Jewish experience in Europe could not be rectified by imposing, by force, the creation of a Jewish State.<sup>129</sup> In a letter to Bramuglia in October 1947, Arce argued that there should be no connection between the displaced people of Europe and Palestine. Plenty of displaced groups had not received backing for a homeland, he argued.<sup>130</sup> The Ambassador's continued support for the Arab side (and his unsavory leadership style) frustrated Bramuglia and his subordinates, all of whom believed the solution lay in some form of a U.N. partition. Lobbyists exploited the rift. Jewish Agency representatives established an intimate dialogue with Arce's deputy and Zionist supporter Enrique Corominas. All the while,

<sup>127</sup> José Arce to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto (MREC) November 15, 1947, JAB papers.

<sup>128</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 24.

<sup>129</sup> Glick, *Latin America and the Palestine Problem*, 86.

<sup>130</sup> Quoted in Rein, *Argentina, Israel and the Jews*, 27.

Arab High Committee members and Arab League representatives secured a close communication with Arce.<sup>131</sup> Heading into the final months before the vote, the Arab World had mobilized a domestic presence in Argentina and built on its political rapport with both Perón and the Argentine Ambassador to the United Nations. Meanwhile, the United States and the Soviet Union both favored the partition, while the United Kingdom threatened to vote against the measure unless the partition (miraculously) satisfied Zionists and Arabs alike. Arabs likely recognized that a First World split would play a role in Argentina's approach since Perón would resist anything that would be construed as First World appeasement. This reality boded well for the Arab cause.

The Cold War circumstances practically guaranteed Argentina would exercise some sort of third option in the pending votes. Arce had not strayed from Perón's third position while at the U.N., and Corominas, reading between the lines, feared Argentina might abstain from the vote altogether. Corominas adamantly argued against such a move, claiming that abstention would signal complete disregard for the momentous event. The vote was so important that even the two competing Cold War powers had set aside their differences to support the plan, he exhorted. He argued that a third position would, in this context, only harm Argentina's international reputation and would add to the Jewish communities' suspicion of Perón both home and abroad.<sup>132</sup>

In September 1947, the UNSCOP issued its recommendations. The eleven-member team, which included the Latin American nations of Peru, Guatemala, and Uruguay, proposed a Jewish and Arab partition with "an enclave (*a corpus separatum*) under international control

<sup>131</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 25.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

consisting of Jerusalem and Bethlehem.”<sup>133</sup> The proposal met with a flurry of additional amendments and recommended changes to the partition boundaries. In response, the U.N. tried to streamline the process by forming an Ad Hoc Committee made up of representatives from all member nations. Argentine delegates remained very active in this chaotic process. Arce himself reaffirmed his support for the Arab cause with a proposal that divided power along a regional basis without territorial partition. Raanan Rein reminds us that due, of course, to their majority population “the Arabs would have enjoyed a superior position” in Arce’s proposal.<sup>134</sup> During the Ad Hoc committee planning process, Arce once again promoted the Arab position by publically arguing that the U.N. had no authority to forcibly create the Jewish state and announced his categorical opposition to the partition of Palestine.<sup>135</sup>

At the conclusion of the debates, the General Assembly agreed to vote on the Ad Hoc Committee’s partition plans within committee on November 25, 1947. The Argentine delegation met briefly weeks before the vote, and Arce reportedly ignored dissenting opinions while unabashedly expressing his pro-Arab sentiments. Corominas, frustrated with Arce’s stubbornness, finally conceded to at least abstaining, but only from the Ad Hoc committee vote. At least here, he believed, the vote would cause minimal political damage despite its implied support for the Arab position. The Argentine delegation did just that, voting in committee to abstain.<sup>136</sup>

The General Assembly vote, however, was far more important. Argentina’s public vote could impact its relations in the Middle East for decades. Corominas tried to counter Arce’s pro-Arab stance by pleading with his superiors not to abstain in the General Assembly. His cries fell

<sup>133</sup> Morris, *1948*, 48.

<sup>134</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 28.

<sup>135</sup> Glick, *Latin America and the Palestine Problem*, 86.

<sup>136</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 30.



on deaf ears. Superiors rebuffed Corominas's contentions and instructed the delegation to abstain from the General Assembly vote.<sup>137</sup> In fact, as the day for the vote grew closer, Jewish Agency Officials had somehow already determined that Argentina was "committed on the Arab side."<sup>138</sup> Ultimately, Argentina abstained in the General Assembly vote on the Partition of Palestine on November 29, 1947. Only five other U.N. members joined Argentina in abstaining from the historic vote. Although the partition plan passed the General Assembly, Arab leaders rejected it. Soon after, the sporadic fighting in Palestine erupted into a full-scale civil war and the United Nations never had the opportunity to implement its plan.

Scholars have underestimated this vote ever since. At first glance, abstention appeared to align with Argentina's traditional practice of noninterference, but it represented a far more complicated picture. The vote reflected Argentina's continued support for the Arab World and successful lobbying efforts by the Arab proponents. Other than voting against the partition, abstaining was the only other option that could undermine Zionist ambitions. Scholar Edward Glick believes that abstention "to a great extent (can) be explained in terms of the influence of their Arab communities."<sup>139</sup> Whether domestic or international pressures played a greater role in Argentina's decisions is unclear, but the final vote undoubtedly benefited the Arab cause. The vote also proved useful for Argentina. Perón understood that if the Zionist movement had enough support, Argentina's vote would be inconsequential and thus useful for his own objectives. Arce stated as much in October 1947, claiming that "the Jews do not need us and Argentina must maintain its good friendship with the Arab and neighboring Moslem

<sup>137</sup> Corominas to Bramuglia, November, 25, 1947, JAB papers.

<sup>138</sup> Morris, 1948, 54.

<sup>139</sup> Glick, *Latin America and the Palestine Problem*, 113.

countries.”<sup>140</sup> The vote strengthened Argentina’s relationship with the Arab World while also furthering Perón’s international objectives.

### *Reaction in Argentina*

Arab-Argentines and Arabs in the Middle East celebrated Argentina’s decision. The Arab League and other national Arab leaders recognized abstention as a form of alignment with the Arab-Palestinian cause, as did many within the Arab-Argentine community. Perón received overwhelmingly positive response from Arab communities after the announcement of the vote. The Syrian-Lebanese Society of Santiago de Estero, the Syrian-Lebanese Club of San Juan, and the Arab-Muslim society in the Cordoba province, among other notable Arab civic organizations, forwarded notes of gratitude to government leaders. The Arab journal *Los Dones* of Tucúman - the Arab provincial stronghold of Argentina – expressed thanks to the Perón administration for its support for the Arab cause, along with the Central Arab Committee for Aid to Palestine and its Perónist general secretary Elías Richa. Richa and Ibrahim Hallar also attended a mass gathering to celebrate the decision. Richa announced to the people that their attendance was an expression of gratitude to the Argentine people and the government for adopting a position “before the assembly of the U.N., in defense of the Palestine sovereignty.”<sup>141</sup> Hallar followed with his own speech congratulating the crowd on the occasion and suggested that Argentina served as the symbol of resistance to the unjustified cause for a National Jewish Home in Palestine.<sup>142</sup> An Argentine circular ran headline in October 1947, thanking Perón for his pro-

<sup>140</sup> Quoted in Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 27.

<sup>141</sup> DAIA, “Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentine,” 9.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid*, 10-11.

Arab policy.<sup>143</sup> The Perón administration and its Arab allies recognized that benefit of abstaining, which further reaffirmed the growing relationship.

## **Conclusion**

Argentina's often misunderstood abstention in the Palestine vote was actually a historic moment that reshaped the country's foreign policy. The notion that abstention was simply an inability to take a position on an issue is too simplistic a conclusion and a far too common explanation. Abstention is not merely an absence of conviction, it is a viable political option that, when understood in its context, can reveal the intent behind certain policies. In the case of Argentina and the partition vote, an explanation that simply reduces the government's decision to a moment of inaction is an erroneous assessment. Abstention could not, under any circumstances, have helped the Zionist cause. To survive the vote, Zionists' position required unequivocal affirmation and Argentina understood that truth. The Arabs, however, needed the resolution to fail no matter whether this came through abstentions, negative votes, or a combination of the two. Here abstention was the lesser of two acceptable options for the Arabs. When coupled with Perón's affinity for the Arab people, his unprecedented diplomacy in the Arab World, and Arab reaction both at home and abroad to the Palestine vote, Argentina's abstention was intended to help the Arab cause.

The vote also represented one of the first instances of nonaligned thinking. When examined against Argentina's notoriously ambiguous and heavily nuanced foreign policy, the motivations behind the abstention become clearer. Perón preferred international policies that offered multiple avenues, a method exemplified by his frequent and sometimes conflicting public assurances. Therefore, historians should value the actions of Perón and his representatives more

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

than their words, especially regarding Argentina's role and position in the partition process. The vote acted as a dual-headed strategy that satisfied appearances of non-interference while championing a nonaligned campaign against Cold War pressure. The vote was foundational to Argentine-Arab World diplomacy. Broader still, the relationship represented some of the earliest instances of cooperation against the postcolonial order. In the face of arguably the most controversial episode of modern history, Perón unexpectedly adjusted Argentina's doctrine of neutrality to support the Arab World. Argentina willing set aside years of tradition in an effort to combat rigid Cold War alignment. Largely overlooked, Latin America played host to some of the earliest demonstrations of collective nonalignment and provided the blueprint for a greater movement.

## Chapter Two: Argentine-Arab World Relations in the Aftermath of the Partition

Argentina proved to be an important ally for the Arab World in the U.N. partition debates over Palestine. The long and delicate process revealed that the Perón administration would, for the foreseeable future, continue to resist the dictates of foreign powers and pursue its own course of action based on national interests. Likewise, Argentina earned a reputation as a partner to the Arab World. At the time, the moniker bought favor with developing nations and did not seem to threaten First World interests. In essence, Perón capitalized on the Palestine vote by projecting Argentina's power outside the Western Hemisphere without seriously threatening the Cold War structure.

The partitioning, however, did little more than accelerate the conflict in Palestine and attract Cold War superpowers. The local conflict was quickly becoming a regional Cold War. The dynamics put Argentina's efforts with the Arab World in a tenuous position. As the violence in Palestine spiraled out of control, Cold War actors quickly began reasserting their influence in the region. The Perón administration pushed forward with its nonaligned agenda but also tried to maintain its doctrine of noninterference in national disputes, or least offer appearances of such. In fact, the administration launched a public campaign that reiterated its neutrality in the Palestine conflict. Perón understood that openly championing anti-First World alliances would win support from the developing world but might also anger larger countries. Likewise, Arab nations could advance his regional goals, but might further isolate Perón and Argentina. Although the Perón administration had advocated for a third position and worked closely with Arab nations on several occasions at the U.N., the international focus on the

Middle East and the potential domestic consequences convinced the government, at a minimum, to give appearances of impartiality.

Perón frequently buried his intentions in the nuances of policy. Whether offering support to Zionists and Arabs simultaneously or reassuring the United States of his loyalty while berating the U.S. publically, Perón displayed a penchant for confusing, seemingly contradictory strategies. In light of this precedent, Perón's nonintervention policies and public expressions of neutrality in the conflict did not necessarily equate to nonpartisanship in regional diplomacy. Despite public assurances of disinterest, Argentina's diplomatic material from the late 1940s reveals a remarkable surge in its diplomatic activities in the Arab World. Despite Perón's own assurances, increased regional conflict, and Cold War meddling, this period marked an extraordinary moment in Argentina's relationship with the developing world. The resultant transnational experience proved to be a remarkable one, unparalleled among the Global South community. The unheard-of transoceanic interchange between Latin America and the Middle East was one of the first examples of cooperation between developing regions. The relationship also acted as a precursor to the nonaligned movement of the later decades. This brief moment in history completely reshaped Argentina's Middle East foreign policy for the remainder of the twentieth century.

This unprecedented escalation in Argentine diplomacy with the Arab World amid the spike in violence contradicted Perón's open expressions of neutrality. In fact, Perón's Cold War foreign policies relied on reformist states, like Syria and Egypt, for a post-colonial collaboration. Building on Argentina's historic rapport with the Arab League, Perón saw an opportunity to profit from ideas of nationalism and sovereignty spreading through the Arab World. The moment presented Argentina with opportunities for cooperation among developing nations. The

Arab-Israeli conflict and the subsequent negotiations gave Perón the avenue he needed to placate Cold War superpowers by crafting an image of genuine concern for conflict resolution. But the evidence suggests that Perón actually used the war to further relationships in the Arab World.

### **Entering the Arab World**

After the U.N. General Assembly adopted the partition resolution in December 1947, the sporadic violence in Palestine erupted into a full-scale civil war. Fighting between Arab and Zionist forces debilitated transportation, stymied economic exchange, and destroyed neighborhoods. Many Arab residents fled into neighboring countries, creating a refugee dilemma. Their stories of abuse at the hands of Zionist fighters emboldened Arab states and angered representatives at the United Nations, already frustrated that the resolution had failed to remedy the situation. The Civil War intensified in the coming months, climaxing with the expiration of the British Mandate on May 15, 1948, which left no internationally recognized governing authority in the Palestine territories. On that day, the leader of the World Zionist Organization, David Ben-Gurion, unilaterally declared the birth of Israel. The Arab League immediately led a ramshackle coalition of Arab militaries from nations still reeling from “extreme poverty, domestic discord, and internal rivalries,” to war against the new Jewish state.<sup>144</sup>

The unilateral declaration grabbed the attention of Arab communities in Argentina. Some journalists used the opportunity to berate the Zionists’ official proclamation of statehood. Negib R. Lahoud, the editor of *El Chajá* journal, responded to the invasion with a publication entitled “The Tragedy of Palestine,” which circulated widely among local Arab-Argentine

<sup>144</sup> Baylis Thomas, *How Israel Was Won: A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1999, 81; Morris, 1948, 75-183.

communities. Likewise, the prodigious Central Arab Committee with Aid to Palestine ran numerous ads and articles throughout 1948 that assailed the Zionist movement and abuses inflicted on Arab-Palestinians. In one advertisement, the committee asked for donations to go towards supporting those 400,000 Palestinians displaced from their land and homes. The money, would be used “to mitigate the indigence of so many thousands of children, old people, women and men who suffer from hunger and untold misery.”<sup>145</sup> The ad was just the beginning. The committee published similar advertisements and pamphlets that highlighted the Arab plight in Palestine and praised the work of those fighting for Palestinian sovereignty.<sup>146</sup>

Local Arab religious organizations reacted to the Israeli declaration of statehood with similar intensity. In one instance, a Greek-Orthodox church in the Córdoba Province in central Argentina -- an Arab immigrant stronghold -- responded to the growing conflict by planning a mass service on May 23<sup>rd</sup> for the supporters of Arab-Palestinians. Noted Arab sympathizers Father Maximos Chalhoub and Father Atanasio Farah led the short-notice event. The two leaders planned to bring the community together to pray for the “triumph of the just and noble cause of the Arab people...in the holy land of our fathers...in defense of the rights of the holy Arab cause.” Chalhoub and Farah asked invitees to “pray united and with holy fervor” for the triumph of “right and justice, with which our brethren shed their blood” in the “land of the Arabs.”<sup>147</sup> The response in Argentina illustrated a key transition in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict: the Palestine dilemma had become internationalized. The United Nations partition debates and the resurgence of superpower meddling in Palestine had indeed contributed to the issue’s globalization. Yet, as was evident in Argentina, the conflict had moved beyond the shadowy politics of international bodies and now resonated with local citizens. The polarizing nature of

<sup>145</sup> DAIA, “Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentine,” 13.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



the conflict would soon begin to divide communities, threaten historic alliances, and expose the unflattering side of nationalism. The attention it received in Argentina was a potential threat to nation's foreign policy. Cold War encroachment in the Middle East added to the volatility.

### *Cold War in Palestine*

The Arab-Israeli conflict created a power vacuum that attracted Cold War forces. The resurgence of former imperial governments complicated the dispute between the state of Israel and its Arab neighbors. Leading nations pursued their interests in the Middle East with little regard for even their closest allies. British and French governments exploited the frailty of Arab alliances in order to retain their influence in previously held territories bordering Palestine. Meanwhile, the United States expanded its influence through commercial endeavors that capitalized on the oil boom sweeping through the region. The U.S. government hoped an increased presence would protect the Middle East from the ongoing Soviet encroachment. As the conflict over Palestine worsened, Cold War friends and foes alike moved in intent on maximizing their influence.<sup>148</sup>

The potential threat from Cold War competition and domestic uprisings did not dissuade Argentina from pursuing its objectives. Between 1947 and 1948, Argentina established official diplomatic relations with Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, and expanded its formal ties with Syria and Lebanon.<sup>149</sup> Argentina immediately deployed representatives to the region to begin building the infrastructure for official legations. In an important twist to Argentine foreign policy, however, Perón refused to extend diplomatic recognition to Transjordan. Records suggest that Perón chose such a path because Arab states remained suspicious of King Abdullah and his well-

<sup>148</sup> Irene L. Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield: United States Intervention in Lebanon and the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 90-128.

<sup>149</sup> Klich, "Equidistance and Gradualism...", 219; Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 4.

known ambitions to rule over a Greater Syria - an area that composed Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Arab Palestine. In fact, during an Arab League summit in 1948, officials voiced their grievances and threatened combined action against King Abdullah if he attempted to enact his plans. In short, Arab leaders were not fond of Transjordan. The international community considered the nation to be the “black sheep” of the seven-member Arab League.<sup>150</sup> This atmosphere convinced Argentina that official diplomatic relations with Transjordan threatened its efforts with other Arab nations. Ignacio Klich summarizes that the Perónist government's “concern to avoid straining relations with other more important Arab players” led to postponement of official recognition of the Hashemite Kingdom.<sup>151</sup> Yet, even with Transjordan’s toxic reputation, Perón refused to completely distance his government from the Arab nation.

The crafty Argentine leader exercised carefully nuanced political methods in order to subtly breathe life into a relationship that appeared to be dead. Therefore, lack of recognition for Transjordan did not equate to Argentina’s complete disengagement. In November 1947, the Argentine delegation submitted resolutions to the General Assembly sponsoring Transjordan’s membership into the United Nations. At first glance, the decision seemed strange, if not troublesome, to Argentina’s own efforts with Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia. Yet, this resolution was a bit of Argentine pageantry. Per United Nations regulation, the Security Council, not the Assembly, approved memberships. And, as expected, the proposal failed.<sup>152</sup> It did, however, signal Argentina’s willingness to appease the Arab nation on certain occasions and within specific parameters. This seemingly fruitless exercise typified Argentina’s reliance on

<sup>150</sup>“The World,” *New York Times*, December 19, 1948.

<sup>151</sup> Klich, “Towards a Arab-Latin American Bloc?,” 562.

<sup>152</sup> U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. *The second annual report on the activities of the United Nations and the participation of the United States therein covering the calendar year 1948*. 80<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 1948 (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1948), 334-335.

inconclusive appearances in international affairs. Here again, Argentina displayed what seemed to be “concern with international affairs, but as spectators, not participants.”<sup>153</sup> In reality, Perón likely intended the proposal to leave a political opening with Transjordan, should Argentina need one in the future. Argentina placed Transjordan in a reserve status. More importantly, the sponsorship did not appear to undermine Argentina’s standing with the rest of the Arab League nations, nor did it hamper Argentina’s work on Palestinian issues at the United Nations.

The United Nations remained a unique platform from which Argentina could demonstrate its loyalties to the Arab World. Dr. José Arce, in particular, maintained his support for Arab-Palestinians positions well after the conflict had begun. But rather than acting as an outspoken champion of the Arab World, Dr. Arce protected Arab positions strictly through legal justifications. In March 1948, for example, Dr. Arce challenged the legal authority of a new resolution on U.N. responses to violence in Palestine. Dr. Arce took great exception to a paper drafted by the Legal Affairs Department and the Security Council that claimed “the United Nations had the right to meet Arab resistance in Palestine with enforcement measures.” In a closed door Security Council meeting, Arce reportedly claimed that only “unbalanced minds” could support the conclusions in the “bastard document.”<sup>154</sup> José Arce’s well-known pro-Arab positions remained firmly anchored to the legal protections under the U.N. articles of national sovereignty. Although he remained known for defending his beliefs with intense, sometimes insulting, language, Arce also softened his tone towards Arab World in accordance with Perón’s public assurances of non-interference. Argentina, nevertheless, remained a prized ally of the Arab World.

<sup>153</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 531-532.

<sup>154</sup> José Arce quoted in A. M. Roshental, “Secretariat in U.N. Scored for Opinion,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1948.

Arce's continued aid to the Arabs on issues of Palestine did not go unrewarded. In April 1948, the Argentine delegate won the election for the President of the General Assembly, defeating Chinese delegate Dr. T.F. Tsiang in what the *New York Times* called the "biggest upset of the day." Dr. Arce's win was largely the result of solid support from all the Arab League states and the outlying Muslim countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Turkey. In his victory speech, Arce reminded the assembly of his adherence to legal justifications in any resolution regarding the Palestine Question. "I shall try to keep alien interests outside in the solution of this problem" and instead emphasize sovereignty over, he said, "the places which are holy to mankind." He concluded his speech with the hope that Jews and Arabs could come to some sort of agreement.<sup>155</sup> Arce's call for peace remained listeners of Argentina's noninterference policy in the Palestine conflict. Yet, Argentina's voting patterns remained the same. Perón's non-alignment and noninterference proclamations created an air of disinterest about Argentina's global intentions. The Argentine president had, for the moment, successfully engineered a nuanced foreign policy that continued its tilt towards the Arab World without much commotion. The escalation in relations with Arab countries hardly received a glance from Cold War foes.

### **Argentine-Egyptian Relations**

For Argentina and Egypt, initial diplomacy was superficial. Although Argentine representatives had maintained a presence in Egypt for some time, the Latin American nation expressed no interest in Egyptian commodities or in sustained commerce with the nation. Once Perón came to power, he immediately upgraded Egypt's diplomatic status. This decision seemed curious in light of the Palestine dilemma and his administration's cautious approach to the violence. With the advent of the Arab-Israeli War, observers could construe even perfunctory

<sup>155</sup> José Arce quoted in "Latins, Moslems Join to Name Arce," *New York Times*, April 17, 1948.

dialogue and cultural exchange as a statement of support for Arab position. Yet, Perón had an ambitious Middle East agenda. He also cherished positions that demonstrated autonomy. Perón remained steadfast in his goals of building a relationship with Egypt despite the Arab nation's role in the conflict and the mingling of Cold War foes. The Argentine government continued to promote noninterference policies, but Argentina's presence in Cairo amid the conflict demonstrated its commitment to the pursuit of national interests.

Well connected with the First World and a leader in the Arab League, Egypt offered Argentina access to Cold War intelligence and a partner in the post-colonial international reordering. However, any effective diplomacy demanded the Argentine government have a full understanding of the ramifications of the conflict on Egyptian politics. To complicate matters, Cold War competition grew more intense. The consequences of overlapping conflicts required Argentine officials to maintain their nation's neutral image without sacrificing progress in relations with Egypt.

Argentine officials in Cairo immediately began relaying messages to Buenos Aires that detailed the wartime situation. Argentine official Jorge Brinkmann recounted how Zionist bombing campaigns had damaged buildings and homes throughout Cairo. The Argentine diplomat wrote that Israeli bombs had caused severe damage to major shopping attractions in Cairo. In the short time since the war began, North Americans, Israelis, French, and Arabs were already counted among the victims. The list of nationalities illustrated just how international the conflict had become.<sup>156</sup> The local French-language newspaper, *Le Journal D'Egypte Du Dimanche*, noted that the famous Metropole Theater suffered tremendous damage and recounted

<sup>156</sup> Jorge Angel Guillermo Brinkmann to Foreign Relations Ministry, July 24, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," *Archivo del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto*, Buenos Aires, Argentina. (Hereafter AMREC).

how bombs had killed or injured dozens of residents throughout Cairo.<sup>157</sup> Brinkmann described how the cacophony of sirens and explosions constantly sent people racing for shelter. His report indicated that the onslaught of violence had temporarily stalled his plans for serious diplomatic exchange.

The violence angered many at the United Nations. During a May 1948 meeting of Security Council representatives, the head of the United States delegation, Warren R. Austin, expressed frustration with the fighting, claiming that Arabs were “carrying on a bloody war” in the Holy Land. Accordingly, the United States demanded the English halt all arms shipments to Arab states, namely the British ally Jordan, believing that such a move would put King Abdullah “where he belongs.”<sup>158</sup> The British reminded the U.S. government that weapon deliveries mattered for long-standing treaties and disregarding them would threaten British interests. The dispute, one among several, divided the two otherwise loyal allies. When the United States put forward a measure calling for an end to weapons shipments, Argentina abstained. Perón wanted no part of a proposal that would undermine its position with Egypt or threaten its appearance of partiality.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, Argentina hoped to avoid the infighting among world powers. The squabble portended how the Cold War would further complicate an already complex Middle East. For the moment, however, Argentina avoided becoming caught in the middle.

Meanwhile, the fighting between Arabs and Israelis continued unabated. Brinkmann described Cairo as echoing with the noise of warning sirens as Egyptian anti-aircraft lit up the sky. The unrelenting sounds of war carried on without pause for prolonged periods of time, he

<sup>157</sup> *Le Journal D’Egypte Du Dimanche*, July 20, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder “Asia,” AMREC.

<sup>158</sup> Warren R. Austin quoted in “Wound Fatal to U.S. Aid in Holy Land,” *Dallas Morning News*, May 23, 1948.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

lamented.<sup>160</sup> Brinkmann's reports described an atmosphere of panic and chaos in the Egyptian capital. Then, the United Nations tried again in July 1948 to end the fighting through multilateral resolutions. The Security Council put forward an American-led resolution that gave the Arab League and the state of Israel three days to cease hostilities or face forcible intervention from the United Nations. While receptive to a timeline for peace, Russia opposed other facets of the plan, along with Syria and the Soviet Ukraine. Most other countries, however, joined the United States in supporting a timeline that included possible military action. Once again, Argentina stood firm in its appearances of neutrality and abstained from the vote. Argentine representative opposed any use of U.N. force in Palestine based on legal justifications of national sovereignty.<sup>161</sup>

That same month Syria, a non-permanent member of the Security Council, proposed the Palestine problem be put before the International Court of Justice. Israel countered that such a proposal intended to delay its international recognition and threaten its newfound sovereignty. The Director of the Office of United Nations Affairs for the United States, Dean Rusk, privately expressed similar conclusions, arguing that the Syrian proposal was "diversionary in intent and cannot be considered as a bonafide effort to use the court to move closer to a final settlement."<sup>162</sup> Rusk then added that Arabs had shown "no inclination to settle the Palestine question by adjudication." Above all, he concluded, Arab countries offered no assurances that "the Arab League would accept an opinion of the Court if it favored Israel."<sup>163</sup> This notion was not without merit. In fact, in a December 1948 discussion with then Argentine diplomat Héctor Madero,

<sup>160</sup> Brinkmann to Foreign Relations Ministry, July 24, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>161</sup> "U.N. Orders Battles Cease in Palestine," *Associated Press*, July 16, 1948.

<sup>162</sup> "Memorandum by the Director of the Office of United Nations Affairs (Rusk) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett)," July 15, 1948, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of United States, 1948, Vol. V, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1948), 1222-1223. (Hereafter *FRUS, Vol. V, 1948*).

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

Egyptian leaders stated privately that the time had passed to determine the true heir to the Palestine lands. Who was in the right no longer mattered, and the conflict had moved beyond the point of no return, officials told Madero.<sup>164</sup> The lack of trust in Arab intent convinced many on the Security Council to defeat the proposal. Interestingly, Rusk predicted Argentina would abstain.<sup>165</sup> Here, the Director underestimated Argentina's affinity for the Arab World. This proposal presented the perfect opportunity for Argentina to win the favor of Arab states, while continuing to promote legal solutions in the Palestine dilemma. Although the resolution failed, Argentina stood with Syria and Egypt and voted for the resolution.<sup>166</sup> This slight yet profound move allowed the Perón administration to maintain its appearance of noninterference by only engaging in legally-driven resolutions, while continuing to vote in a manner that subtly favored the Arab World.

All three failed U.N. resolutions acted as microcosms of the larger situation. The lines between Cold War alignment and the Palestine conflict had begun to blur. Moreover, the animosity between the Cold War friends and foes alike had risen to the surface. For Argentina, each vote presented useful opportunities to project a nonpartisan image while simultaneously reaffirming its commitment to Egypt and other Arab states. The violence in Egypt, however, threatened to undo Argentina's good fortune at the United Nations.

#### *Local disputes and Argentine policy*

Despite successfully implementing Perón's third position strategies at the United Nations, the Argentine government grew concerned about Arab and Jewish interaction in Egypt. Argentine records indicate that the Perón administration took a particular interest in how the

<sup>164</sup> "Informar sobre opinión círculos oficiales situación Palestina," Hector Madero to Humberto Sosa Molina, December 3, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>165</sup> "Memorandum by the Director of the Office of United Nations Affairs (Rusk) to the Under Secretary of State (Lovett)," July 15, 1948, vol. V, *FRUS, 1948*, 1222-1223.

<sup>166</sup> "U.N. Refuses Syrian Move on Palestine," *Dallas Morning News*, Jul 28, 1948.



Egyptian leaders exercised their authority over Jewish civilians and how the government resolved conflicts between Arab and Jewish residents. Perón was aware that many observers “at home and abroad considered his relations with the Jews in his country as a test of the character of the regime” after a history of questionable treatment of the Jewish communities by the Argentine government,<sup>167</sup> Although Perón hoped to expand relations in the Arab World, he likely did not want to be put in a position to defend the Egyptian government’s mistreatment of Jewish citizens. Government-sponsored reprisals against Jews would undermine Egypt’s creditability with Perón and likely spark domestic backlash from an Argentine-Jewish constituency already suspicious of the president’s intentions.

The records reflected Perón’s worries. In one such scenario, Brinkmann closely monitored a particular investigation into the bombing of the Metropole Theater. He studiously cataloged a host of media reports and government pronouncements covering the incident. According to one report, Egyptian authorities had, during the course of the investigation, detained a resident Jew who explained to investigators that he witnessed illuminations originating from the sky the night of the attack. After initial questioning, authorities immediately delivered this unknown Jewish resident to headquarters under heavy police escort.<sup>168</sup> Brinkmann included this clipping, knowing that the quality of treatment extended to this individual would elevate some of the concerns back home. The investigation was the just the first of several such incidents in Brinkmann’s diplomatic correspondence.

In July 1948, Brinkmann followed a separate episode in Cairo closely, an incident apparently involving Arab and Jewish residents. Egyptian officials conducted investigations into attacks against a Jewish neighborhood in the city, he wrote. The details surrounding the incident

<sup>167</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 43.

<sup>168</sup> *Le Journal D’Egypte Du Dimanche*, July 20, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder “Asia,” AMREC.

remained unclear, but Egyptian officials conveyed to Brinkmann that everything was under control. In fact, Egyptian authorities made sure Brinkmann reiterated to Argentine officials in Buenos Aires that the security (perhaps for Jewish residents) remained of utmost importance.<sup>169</sup> Brinkmann does not say whether the assurance of security came in response to Argentine questioning or merely as an attempt to head off inquiries before they surfaced. Nevertheless, the Egyptian officials' recognized Argentine concern for their reactions to local violence between Arabs and Jews. Those assurances did not seem to stop aggression against Jewish residents.

In November 1948, a local Arab-language newspaper *Al Zaman* reported that security officials had detained several individuals for using a vehicle to transport arms and explosives.<sup>170</sup> The *Le Journal D'Egypte Du Dimanche* reported that residents could hear shouts of "Zionists, Zionists" in and around the vicinity of the vehicle some time before the arrests.<sup>171</sup> The Egyptian authorities tied the vehicle and the explosives back to the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization responsible for several attacks on Jewish enclaves in Cairo.<sup>172</sup> This organization was a thorn in the side of the Egyptian government. The Brotherhood, with its dogmatic religious ideologies, had a history of threatening the power of the secular-leaning Egyptian government, which had resulted in its political and exile. Despite its isolation, the Muslim Brotherhood survived as a menace to Egyptian authority. The organization became especially hostile at the outset of the Arab-Israeli conflict.<sup>173</sup> In the winter of 1948, the Brotherhood, unsatisfied with the government's performance against the Zionists, elevated its preferred targets from Jewish

<sup>169</sup> Brinkmann to Foreign Relations Ministry, June 23, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>170</sup> *Al Zaman*, November 21, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>171</sup> *Le Journal D'Egypte Du Dimanche*, November 21, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Abd al-Fattah El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Palestine Question, 1928-1947* (London: I.B.Tauris, 1998).

neighborhoods to foreign governments. In a secret memorandum from November 1948, new Argentine envoy Héctor Madero informed his superiors that security forces had arrested three Muslim Brotherhood activists in possession of explosives they intended to use in an attack on the French Embassy in Cairo.<sup>174</sup> The incident underscored for Argentina the delicate nature of the situation. Argentine officials had to be wise in implementing Perón's aggressive policy in such a volatile environment, lest its government become the new target of local groups.

As Argentine officials kept a close eye on the emerging conflicts between Jews and Arabs, the confrontation between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian government climaxed with the assassination of Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud Nokrashy in December 1948. The Argentine newspaper *La Nación* reported that a university student and member of the Brotherhood murdered the Egyptian Prime Minister due to failures in the war against the Jews.<sup>175</sup> It was now apparent that the Muslim Brotherhood had the capacity to reach the highest officials in government. Nevertheless, Argentina moved forward. Diplomats in Cairo continued to inform officials back in Argentina on the local hostilities and incidents related to the Palestine conflict. The relationship with Egypt showed no signs of slowing as an Argentine training vessel docked on the Egyptian coast.

As the war raged in Palestine and the Cold War began to envelope the region, the Argentine government kept its commitment to Egypt and moved ahead with its naval visit scheduled for August 1948. The "*Argentina*," a ten-year old Argentine training vessel, docked in Alexandria, Egypt, on August 18th on one of the last legs in its global tour. The approximately

<sup>174</sup> Madero to Foreign Relations Ministry, November 18/19, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>175</sup> "Fue Asesinado en La Capital Egipcia El Primer Ministro," December 29, 1948, *La Nación*, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

140 marines aboard received a tremendous welcome from Egyptian officials.<sup>176</sup> Local French and Arabic language newspapers followed the interaction with great enthusiasm as Egyptian security officials shuttled Captain Alberto Lonardi, Brinkmann, and others from one government office to the next, from one banquet luncheon to another.<sup>177</sup> The Argentine Commander met with countless government officials who showered praise on the visitors and frequently expressed hopes that each country could build better relations. Although Egypt had restricted all intra-country diplomatic travel and foreign visitors' travel due to the war, Brinkmann considered the visit extremely important in furthering relations with Egypt.<sup>178</sup> Argentina's arrival in wartime, he believed, proved his nation's commitment to successful relations with Egypt.<sup>179</sup> The naval stopover was representative of Argentina's proactive and unprecedented expansion of Middle East relations.

Egyptian leaders acknowledged the importance in Argentina's commitment to the region and responded accordingly. At a ceremony in early September 1948, in which foreign diplomats "present[ed] their credentials" to Egyptian authorities, King Farouk extended a special welcome to the Argentine diplomats.<sup>180</sup> Though pro-West, the king disliked the Americans and the English.<sup>181</sup> Therefore, it came as little surprise when the Egyptian government made a point not to offer a special date for the U.S. credentialing ceremony. Instead, the king held a singular

<sup>176</sup> "Le navire-école," August 21, 1948, *La Bourse Egyptienne*, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>177</sup> Assortment of newspaper clippings, August 21-23, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>178</sup> Brinkmann to Foreign Relations Ministry, August 3, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>179</sup> "Informar sobre visita Crucero La Argentina," Brinkmann to Juan Bramuglia, August 31, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>180</sup> "Informar sobre presentación credenciales," Madero to Bramuglia, September 9, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>181</sup> Madero to Foreign Relations Ministry, September 1, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

ceremony for Argentina underscoring the Latin American nation's importance to Egypt.<sup>182</sup>

Moreover, by excluding the First World, the Egyptian government provided some of the first signs of its movement towards non-alignment. The Perón administration welcomed this subtle gesture and expressed its delight at the subsequent meetings.

King Farouk surprised the new Argentine Ambassador, Héctor Madero, when during their private meeting he conveyed rather confidential opinions about Argentina. King Farouk claimed the two nations shared many similarities in their international problems and praised Perón for his reform of his nation's economy and social structure through the Five Year Plan. Farouk expressed interest in obtaining literature on the plan, to Madero's satisfaction. Madero emphasized to officials in Buenos Aires that the king's frank comments were "not common" in these situations. The king surprised Madero with his openness, and the Argentine official enthusiastically agreed to provide material detailing Perón's reforms. The private and uplifting meeting ended with both parties agreeing to take steps that would strengthen the two nations' economic and political relationship.<sup>183</sup>

Other Egyptian officials echoed the king's private statement and wasted no time in publically declaring their support for deeper ties with Argentina. During an interview published in a local newspaper, a high-level Egyptian official heaped praise on Perón for his economic and social reforms and suggested that the Argentine president's industrial renewal – likely referring to nationalization – could serve as an example for Egypt. The reaction from Egyptians officials

<sup>182</sup> Ibid; "Informar sobre visita Crucero La Argentina," Brinkmann to Juan Bramuglia, August 31, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>183</sup> "Informar sobre presentación credenciales," Madero to Bramuglia, September 9, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

convinced Madero that with due diligence, the relationship with Egypt could produce positive results.<sup>184</sup>

Meanwhile, the Arab-Israeli conflict extended into the winter months of 1948 with little end in sight. Cold War tensions had also manifested themselves throughout the region. The French and British Mandates had expired, but each nation reinforced its strategic presence in the region. The British, in particular, remained ensconced in the Suez Canal to ensure their control over the vital shipping lane.<sup>185</sup> Former imperial powers felt the need to re-exert their control over oil-rich portions of the region. This fight for influence and oil opened the flood gates to the suffocating competition between the United States and Soviet Union and further blended the uncertainty of the Cold War with the volatility of the Palestine conflict.<sup>186</sup>

Although the Argentine government remained resolute in furthering its interests with Egypt, it still had to negotiate its way through the evolving Cold War battle-ground. Perón showed no desire to change course from his non-interference position in the ongoing Palestine conflict. Despite his best efforts, however, Argentina's increased presence in Cairo and other spots in the Arab World caught the attention of the American government. In a confidential U.S. communication, American diplomats expressed concern over weapon shipments arriving in Palestine for Arab forces. American officials conceded that Arab forces received the bulk of their weapons from British sources but feared that, as the English slowed their supply, Arabs would look for alternative options, such as Argentina.<sup>187</sup> Questions surrounding Argentine intentions in the Middle East resurfaced at the December 1948 Paris Peace Conference. After

<sup>184</sup> Brinkmann to Rosa, June 16, 1948, División de Política, Box 20, Folder 5 "Egypt," AMREC.

<sup>185</sup> Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, 135-148; James Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 130-145.

<sup>186</sup> Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 166-190; Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 73-158.

<sup>187</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Probable Effects On Israel and the Arab States of a UN Arms Embargo," August 5, 1948, *FRUS*, vol. V, 1948, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1282.

the U.S. leadership marshaled together Latin American support for yet another resolution on Palestine, U.S. Delegate John Foster Dulles instructed the U.S. ambassadors that it was not “advisable” to communicate with Argentina on these matters.<sup>188</sup>

Those suspicions proved well-founded. In January 1948, Abid Wahid had, in fact, approached the Argentine official in Beirut requesting that the Latin American nation provide weapons for the Arab forces. The appeal originated from Saudi Arabia, which supported larger Egyptian units with a small amount of personnel and materials. Argentine official Alberto Vinas declined the request reiterating his nation’s neutrality in the conflict. He did, however, recommend Spain as a potential partner. Overall, military sales were, as Ignacio Klich writes, “counterproductive for Argentina’s carefully choreographed efforts to avoid the appearance of taking a position in the Arab-Israeli conflict.”<sup>189</sup> However, the Jewish Telegraph Agency published a report in February 1948 claiming that private firms in Argentina sold military hardware to Arab countries with the consent of Argentine authorities. According to a Jewish source in Buenos Aires, the Argentine government sanctioned the shipment of small weapons to Arab countries. That same month, a French intelligence officer warned Moshe Shertok, then the head of the Jewish Agency’s political department, that Argentina planned to ship light weapons to Lebanon in the near future.<sup>190</sup> The reports of shipments from private firms and Vinas’ willingness to redirect Saudi requests to Spain all indicate Argentina’s by proxy support for the Arab World.

The once discreet and ambiguous pattern of support Argentina had shown the Arab World lost its concealment. Argentina’s close dealings with Arab nations had apparently caught

<sup>188</sup> The Acting Chairman of the United States Delegation at Paris (Dulles) to the Acting Secretary of State, December 1, 1948, *FRUS*, Vol. V, 1948, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1640.

<sup>189</sup> Klich, “Equidistance and Gradualism,” 225.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid*, 226.

the eye of at least one Cold War superpower. Egyptian officials even expressed concerns over the implications of increased Cold War oversight. The King worried that Palestine would eventually fall under the hegemony of the Soviets or the United States, Madero wrote in a December memo. The Egyptian leader believed that the demand for oil would turn the Middle East into a Cold War battle ground.<sup>191</sup> Even in the face of Cold War uncertainty and possible punitive action from First World governments, however, Argentina chose to continue its diplomatic endeavors with Egypt. The nation was simply too critical for the success of Perón's third position policy. As the Perón administration maneuvered through the difficult atmosphere in Egypt, Argentina was also pursuing diplomatic efforts in Saudi Arabia.

### **Argentine-Saudi Arabia Relations**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia solidified itself as a modern state after centuries of tribal division with the unification of the Hejaz and Najd clans under the rule of Abdul Aziz Al Sa'ud in 1933. Its rise to prominence, however, to the 1927 Treaty of Jeddah, which allowed the British to extend their domain over coastal areas of the Arabian Peninsula so long as their forces respected the territories of King Abd al-Aziz Ibn Sa'ud. This special relationship steadily progressed into an alliance that saw the Saudi Arabian nation support the British in World War II.<sup>192</sup> "It was World War II," Irene L. Gendzier concludes, "that reinforced the value of Britain's role in the Middle East, while underscoring the invaluable prize that the region offered – its petroleum reserves."<sup>193</sup> The partnership endured until American companies arrived.

<sup>191</sup> "Informar sobre opinión circulos oficiales situación Palestina," Madero to Molina, December 3, 1948, División de Política, Egypt, Box 20, Folder "Asia," AMREC.

<sup>192</sup> William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *History of the Modern Middle East* 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 2008), 233.

<sup>193</sup> Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 7.



Saudi Arabia's cordial history with the British lent itself to other beneficial relationships with Western nations, particularly the United States. America's commercial entry into Saudi Arabia broke the decades-long British dominance over the Kingdom. The discovery of petroleum reserves in 1938 led to the creation of a massive oil industry initially bankrolled by the U.S.-based company Standard Oil of California. Although World War II temporarily delayed production, expansion in the late 1940s gave the United States a permanent foothold in Saudi Arabia and began the process of prying loose the English grip on the nation's government. The production from the Arabian-American Oil Company (ARAMCO), the result of merging American and Saudi oil interests, skyrocketed. Between 1944 and 1950, yields grew exponentially from 21,296 barrels daily in 1944 to over 500,000 by the end of the decade.<sup>194</sup> Those enormous petroleum reserves propelled Saudi Arabia into the ranks of the Arab elite, fashioning it the international darling of the Arab World.

The production spike after World War II naturally attracted other Cold War actors. Saudi Arabia's global notoriety and its natural resources made it the ultimate prize of every leading nation. Saudi Arabia represented the precious commodity that was critical for Cold War victory.<sup>195</sup> Although the British had long occupied the political space in Saudi Arabia, the rapid growth in U.S. commercial agreements brought with it the fog of war. The global conflict descended onto Saudi Arabia like a dark cloud, much like it had in other areas of the world. Newly appointed Argentine diplomat Antonio Guffanti asserted in October 1948 that, although there was no official Soviet representation in the country, the petroleum relations with the United States virtually guaranteed Communist political maneuvers and eventual Soviet encroachment.<sup>196</sup> Argentine officials stationed in the Arab World continued to face new obstacles in the quest to

<sup>194</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>195</sup> Cleveland and Bunton, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 393-395.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

implement Perón's policies. The scenarios unfolding in Saudi Arabia proved different than Egypt. The Cold War had arguably more impact on the country and Argentine-Saudi Arabian relations than the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict.

Until October 1948, Saudi Arabia remained largely unscathed by the ongoing Palestine conflict. The Kingdom always offered the proper rhetoric in support of the Palestinian cause, but contributed little in the way of military operations. The Saudi government deployed just over one thousand armed personnel to supplement larger Egyptian forces out of the Sinai.<sup>197</sup>

Although these men fought "bravely," they were mere "auxiliaries" compared to other national Arab forces dedicated to the conflict.<sup>198</sup> At the United Nations, however, Saudi Arabian delegates took a far more visible stance. The Chief of Saudi Arabian Delegation to the General Assembly, Amir Faisal, reminded his U.S. counterparts in September 1948 that the Arab nation still considered that Count Bernadotte's partition favored "the Provisional Government of Israel." In Faisal's view, the Palestine problem would never be solved so long as Israel existed and the U.N. would never receive the support of the Arab World.<sup>199</sup> For Saudi Arabia, debating American officials at the U.N. was a comfortable alternative to dispatching forces to the frontlines. And a nominal military contribution meant an absence of Israeli attacks on the home front. As a result, the Saudi Kingdom avoided the destruction Brinkmann had witnessed in Egypt. Instead, Argentine officials in Saudi Arabia faced a different type of devastation.

The living conditions and strict Islamic law governing the nation shocked newly appointed Argentine Ambassador Antonio Guffanti. After his arrival in Jeddah sometime between August and September 1948, Guffanti described the city as especially dirty with people

<sup>197</sup> Morris, 1948, 205.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 326.

<sup>199</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Henry S. Villard of the Advisory Staff of the United Nations Delegation to the General Assembly," September 22, 1948, *FRUS*, Vol. V, 1948, *The Near East, South Asia, and Africa*, 1416.

living in squalor. The streets, he wrote, were havens for disease, and the heat was so unbearable that diplomats left the country altogether in August and September.<sup>200</sup> In Mecca, Medina, and Riyadh, police routinely enforced anti-smoking laws and threatened citizens with lashes if they failed to attend required services at the mosque. Women, he noted, lived permanently in the home, and when in public, they covered themselves in a full length, black dress called a “sutra.”<sup>201</sup> Saudi Arabia did not have the cosmopolitan trappings of Egypt or a beautiful port city, such as Alexandria. The poor conditions haunted relations from the beginning. At the moment, however, the lack of social progress was an acceptable drawback in Perón’s overall goals in expanding Argentina’s presence in the Arab World. The administration seemed more concerned with the Saudi Kingdom’s regional reputation. Despite Saudi Arabia’s Western leanings, the nation demonstrated a willingness to challenge Western superpowers’ positions, such as on the Palestine dilemma. This attitude put the Kingdom in good standing with other Arab leaders. Saudi Arabia represented a potential conduit for affirming Argentina’s Third World credentials with other Arab leaders. Likewise, Saudi Arabia recognized the significance relations with Argentina would have on developing nations and welcomed its representatives with enthusiasm.

### *Official Meetings*

In October 1948, the Saudi leadership held credentialing ceremonies for all incoming foreign diplomats. As was the custom, each diplomat presented his or her credentials to an appointed representative and, as it had occurred in Egypt, the leadership of Saudi Arabia made a

<sup>200</sup> “Informe de iniciación e insalubridad de Djedda-Arabia Saudita,” Antonio Guffanti to Molina, November 3, 1948, División de Política, Box 29, Folder “Países Arabes,” AMREC.

<sup>201</sup> “Informe sobre política interna; evolución de los partidos políticos y perspectivas de los mismos en el futuro,” Guffanti to Molina, November 30, 1948, División de Política, Box 29, Folder “Países Arabes,” AMREC.

point to extend Argentine officials a special ceremony. The Saudi King, Guffanti wrote, provided a separate meeting for “our country” with intention of distinguishing their presence from those foreign diplomats of the United States and England.”<sup>202</sup> During this special meeting, the Saudi King made it known that his government desired commercial relations with Argentina. He took a great interest in Argentine agriculture, industry, and *Perónismo*, an upbeat Guffanti relayed in his correspondence. The special ceremony and positive exchange gave both sides confidence that future relations would prove beneficial.<sup>203</sup>

Separate meetings with other Saudi government ministers yielded similarly positive results. In a private conference with Guffanti, Prince Faisal, a senior official and heir to the throne, responded glowingly to Argentina’s unprecedented gesture in officially recognizing Saudi Arabia. Underscoring Perón’s interest in the region, Argentina was the first from Latin America to extend official diplomatic relations to the Saudi Kingdom. Faisal stated with confidence that his government knew how to return the honor.<sup>204</sup> In fact, Argentina was already profiting from a generous oil export agreement with Saudi Arabia, and when Argentina accumulated a hefty deficit by the early 1950s, Saudi Arabia did not demand repayment. Perhaps the Saudi Arabia returned the honor then.<sup>205</sup>

The minister went on to express interest in Argentina’s aviation advancement and then praised Perón for his social and economic reforms, declaring that Saudi Arabians shared the sentiments of *Perónismo*.<sup>206</sup> This language reflected the affinity among many developing nations for centralized economic policies. And these words were without doubt more than mere

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> “Informar Llegada a Djedda,” Guffanti to Molina, October 20, 1948, División de Política, Box 29, Folder “Paises Arabes,” AMREC.

<sup>205</sup> Klich, “Equidistance and Gradualism,” 225.

<sup>206</sup> “Informar Llegada a Djedda,” Guffanti to Molina, October 20, 1948, División de Política, Box 29, Folder “Paises Arabes,” AMREC.

platitudes. Faisal's statements of affirmation were extremely important for Saudi Arabia to gain the trust of Argentina. Perón had to ensure that those he pursued possessed a political vision that did not lend itself to Cold War alignment. Despite a large Western presence in Saudi Arabia, officials' assurances implied that Perón had a philosophical partner. Escaping hemispheric isolation and a successful third position foreign policy depended on building relationships with likeminded governments. In a final twist of irony, however, Prince Faisal ended the conversation by thanking the officials for their nation's historically positive treatment of Arab immigrants in Argentina.<sup>207</sup> The Saudi Prince was either unaware of or chose to avoid a discussion on Argentina's poor record on the treatment of Arab immigrants.

The celebration in the initial meetings confirmed for the Perón administration that Saudi Arabia would be a critical asset to its larger plans in the Arab World. Being the first Latin American country to establish official diplomatic relations with the Arab nation, Argentina chose Saudi Arabia as a partner in its non-alignment strategies. One cannot understate this aggressiveness, especially for a government historically prone to neutrality. The move underscored just how serious Perón considered his government's Middle East policies.

## **Conclusion**

One can only see Argentina's surge in diplomatic activity with the Arab World as sudden and rapid. Ignacio Klich rightly claims that "despite the Middle East's remoteness from Argentina's 'normal orbit of interest' Perón's first two terms in elected office witnessed the expansion of the previous regime's links with that region."<sup>208</sup> The intense diplomatic effort was a sharp deviation from Argentina's historic neutrality, especially in light of the first Arab-Israeli

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Klich, "Towards an Arab-Latin American Bloc?," 561.

conflict. Although Perón offered verbal assurances of nonintervention, his administration's unprecedented expansion into the Arab World and its continued support of Arab concerns at the U.N. revealed its dedication to those relationships. The large Arab and Jewish populations in Argentina undoubtedly played a part in this process, but their mere presence does not explain Perón's sudden diplomatic shift.

The evidence suggests that Argentina had every intention of aligning with the Arab World, despite the Cold War and the Palestine dilemma. The subtle nuances of Perón's foreign policies together reveal a concerted effort to foster nonalignment cooperation with Arab countries. Scholarship seems to have confused Perón's rhetoric with his government's action. Political language is frequently used to obscure and mislead, and Perón's typical political ambiguity and equivocation made it almost certain that Arab leaders would not receive Argentine public support for their position, especially regarding the conflict. Yet, almost every action the government took seemed designed to ingratiate itself to the Arab World. Although the Perón administration frequently claimed a foreign policy of neutrality, the records reveal policies that favored the Arab World. The votes at the United Nations and the unprecedented diplomatic recognition of multiple Arab states revealed Argentina's position. The escalation in the Arab-Israeli conflict only served to strengthen Argentine-Arab World relations.

Broader still, the regional conflict provided the catalyst for Perón's Cold War policies of nonalignment. The politically advantageous, albeit polarizing, Israel-Palestine conflict, when coupled with the potential for Third World allies, gave rise to a new era in Argentina's diplomacy. In fact, Argentina's movement into the Middle East amid the Cold War and regional conflict was a result of both coincidence and premeditation. Perón intended to increase Argentina's international notoriety as a non-aligned player but found the opportunity by chance

as the postcolonial era began. The emergence of new nations in the Middle East presented the potential to win allies, many of whom having shed the shackles of colonialism remained hostile to imperial re-intervention. These attitudes fit the profile for Perón's third position alliances. And coincidentally, the advent of the first Arab-Israeli conflict served as an important means for Argentina to gain favor with new Arab allies.

Nationalism, the Cold War, and regional conflict together presented the opportunity for Perón to implement his third position agenda. The moment was a perfect chance for Perón to maximum international exposure while risking minimal political capital. The post-colonial environment gave the Argentine president opportunities for greater national autonomy through Global South cooperation and away from First World alignment. This strategy resulted in one of the original nonaligned movements.

### Chapter Three: The Year of Decision: Argentina in the Middle East, 1949

The post-World War II era ushered in unprecedented opportunities for national identity and self-determination from among developing countries. Now released from the chains of colonialism, formerly subjugated people found a voice and exercised autonomy through newly formed national governments. The new states, eager for economic aid and physical security, formed partnerships with governments on both sides of the Cold War. Many of these relationships aggravated an already volatile situation, which would produce decades of global conflict.

Once Cold War tensions mixed with post-colonial freedoms, unintended consequences quickly followed. By 1949, the rigid international conditions had blurred visions of freedom and left many among the Third World disillusioned. The superpower competition suffocated expressions of liberty and replaced them with political servitude to a respective cause. This subordination undercut political and social opportunities for many developing nations. Whether willingly taking part or helplessly pulled in, Global South nations rarely avoided Cold War alignment.<sup>209</sup> As a result, nationalism faltered in many young nations, sparking incidents of government-led repression and imperial re-intervention. Social injustices and economic inequality still plagued communities despite a greater access to wealth. Privilege survived in the hands of a few, while the remaining wealth spread unevenly among the masses. Yet, the fleeting promises of the postwar era did not completely erase developing countries' ambitions for self-determination. Continued hopes for personal and national sovereignty inspired resistance against the unforgiving Cold War environment. Ideological pressures, Cold War demands, and post-colonial freedoms energized developing countries, forcing a reshuffling of a still uncertain world

<sup>209</sup> Parker "Decolonization, the Cold War, and the Post-Columbian Era," 124-138.



community. Perón believed Argentina, unencumbered by a complete reliance on First World alliances, inspired such a movement.

Argentina had clearly demonstrated a capacity for self-determination and remained convinced of its self-reliance into 1949. After all, Argentina had “largely escaped the harsh effects of postwar economic dislocations” longer than other Latin American countries and possessed the prowess to brave international enterprise unilaterally.<sup>210</sup> However, certain realities confined Argentina’s activities. The impact of U.S. hegemony and economic dependence on Europe limited Argentina’s parameters for unilateral action, and those boundaries began shrinking in 1949. America’s ever-expanding power and Argentina’s continued resistance to alignment led to its increased hemispheric isolation. More importantly, Argentina experienced economic calamities in 1949 directly attributed to past overseas contingences and its own domestic miscalculations. For example, England’s war-ravaged economy was slow to recover from World War II, leaving Argentina to scramble for a comparable trade partner. Meanwhile, severe drought hurt meat and grain production, which was the capstone of the Argentine economy. The poor weather and European war coincided with Perón’s still ongoing nationalization reforms that had “diverted capital and machinery” to government programs and away from the farming sector, which diminished the nation’s “capacity to export foodstuffs.”<sup>211</sup> This perfect storm of adversity and political reforms forced Perón to begrudgingly look to his northern adversary for assistance. Argentina won approval from the United States for future loans to stabilize a faltering economy. Ironically, the economic support re-inspired, rather than hampered, Argentina’s non-alignment strategies.

<sup>210</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 477.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*

Accommodating U.S. economic intervention did little to change Argentina's aversion to American power. Scholar Harold Peterson writes that "Washington's willingness to gamble a multimillion-dollar stake in the hope of redirecting Perón's errant ways" resulted a year later in the ratification of the Rio Defense Treaty. Peterson continues, "Beyond this formality, apparently a *quid pro quo* of the loan agreement," the Perón government remained intransigent to American Cold War advances.<sup>212</sup> "Through 1949, Perón made anti-Americanism a hallmark of both his domestic and foreign policies," scholar David Sheinin notes.<sup>213</sup> Despite the crises of 1949, Argentina did not drastically reshape its foreign policy philosophies; the Perón administration merely reevaluated the nation's targeted audience and reexamined its traditional neutrality with its relentless ambition for global autonomy. Perón believed that new European partners would continue to offer Argentina a subtle pushback against U.S. hemispheric domination without seriously upsetting the Cold War balance. Such relationships remained a token reminder of Argentina's global prowess. However, third position strategies, particularly outside the Western Hemisphere, continued as a primary objective in Perón's policies. The government hoped such an endeavor would offer an outlet for hemispheric isolation, repair domestic finances through new economic exchange, and expand Argentina's global footprint.

Engaging developing nations outside the Western Hemisphere remained Perón's true measure of autonomy. Argentina continued to exhibit a particular affinity for developing nations at the United Nations. For example, Argentina won a seat on the U.N. Commission for India and Pakistan, a committee charged with bringing about a solution to the conflict over the disputed

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, 481.

<sup>213</sup> Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States*, 96.

Kashmir region.<sup>214</sup> This position not only perpetuated appearances of neutrality, but improved Argentina's image in the Arab World just as Argentine diplomats began work in the region. Yet, the project of post-colonialism in the Middle East was on a collision course with the Cold War. The conflict exacerbated ancient Arab rivalries, worsened inter-Arab disunity, and internationalized the Palestine conflict. The Argentine government learned that the Middle East in 1949 was no place for appearance-based policies that sought notoriety without serious political sacrifice. The unforgiving atmosphere left little room for political fluidity, a staple of Perón's foreign policy. As soon as Argentine diplomats settled in, they discovered that extended work in places like Damascus, Cairo, and Jeddah was worlds away from backing the Arab League in the halls and auditoriums of the United Nations. Supporting from a distance was, comparatively much easier than balancing Cold War competition with inter-Arab rivalries locally. Instead, Argentina emphasized state-to-state relations over the Arab League to manage the difficult situation. In doing so, the Argentine government continued to temper its public bravado about the Palestine Question and maintained positions that would not attract undue attention from First World hawks. However, these calculated decisions did not detract from Perón's continued advancement of third position strategies. Rather, they acted as a smokescreen to obscure the government's intentions. In fact, evidence reveals that the Argentine president made tactical decisions to move away from U.S.-aligned Arab states in favor of "reformist Arab regimes," inspired by nationalism, eager for centralized government, and not beholden to American power.<sup>215</sup> In short, the Argentine leader reaffirmed his faith in non-alignment.

<sup>214</sup> U.S. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. *The fourth annual report on the activities of the United Nations and the participation of the United States*, 81<sup>st</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., May 22, 1950 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1950), 202.

<sup>215</sup> Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 274.

The decision to distance Argentina from conservative states belied the government's neutral language and signaled the intent to move forward with nonaligned strategies. Overall, this was a period of recalculation, a moment for Perón to refocus the government's policies that ultimately put Argentina further left despite a softened rhetoric towards Palestine. The year 1949 became arguably the most defining twelve-month period in the history of Argentina's Cold War policy in the Middle East.

### **Argentina in the Arab World**

As the collapse of the colonial order gave way to a period of national autonomy, Arab states remained the target of imperial meddling. European nations seemed intent on not relinquishing their influence over previously held territories, while the Soviets and Americans quickly seized upon vacancies and expanded their rivalry into the Arab World. European territorial disputes and First World infighting inflamed an already ferocious regional Cold War and precipitated the division of Arab states. The Cold War pitted conservative camps, those inclined to Western powers, against reformist camps, those who favored the Soviet Union or championed non-alignment.

The Cold War divisions aroused age-old debates over ideas of regionalism, Islamic unification, and Arab nationalism. The increased friction among local elites prevented the long-awaited execution of the pan-Arab movement. In the end, the period of postcolonialism never completely delivered on its expectations. William Cleveland and Martin Bunton write that neither "Pan-Arab unity nor Islamic solidarity could subsume the regional nationalisms favored by the new political elite seeking to build its own bases of local power."<sup>216</sup> Moreover, the prospects for an unprecedented show of Arab cooperation could not overcome the attractiveness

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, 237.

of the Cold War bounty. Cleveland and Bunton write, “Economic assistance and military weapons became the new commodities of alliance building.”<sup>217</sup> Jordan and Saudi Arabia embraced Western alignment, whereas the reluctant Arab states of Syria and Egypt remained hesitant towards and skeptical of First World powers. The Cold War foes’ uncomplicated interpretation of their competitors’ motives led to equally uncomplicated responses, which ironically complicated the Middle East beyond measure.<sup>218</sup>

For Argentina, navigating this regional Cold War on the ground proved much more difficult than operating as an outside observer. Perón’s hopes for increased Third World cooperation in the Arab World were no doubt easier to envision when Argentina worked with international organizations like the Arab League and had no diplomats in the region. Pleasantries and celebratory language that accompanied the diplomatic credentialing during Argentina’s first appearance in the Arab World in 1947 and 1948 turned to restrained enthusiasm, even frustration, entering 1949. The move from transatlantic diplomacy to in-country representation stunted Argentine ambition and forced a reassessment of Arab-Argentine relations. Argentine’s reevaluation involved an intimate monitoring of the developments in the Palestine conflict without engaging in it.

### *Palestine and Argentina*

By 1949, the first pan-Arab war experiment against the Zionist state had all but failed. The outcome surprised few since Arab League forces were ill-equipped for battle and badly outnumbered. The execution was haphazard and poorly coordinated. One historian called the Arab coalition “one of the most divided, disorganized, and ramshackle coalitions in the entire

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid*, 273.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*.

history of warfare.”<sup>219</sup> The ineffectuality of Arab collaboration left the Arab street demoralized. With the assistance of U.N. mediator Ralph Bunche, Israel and its Arab opponents abandoned full-scale peace treaties and settled on less-desirable armistice agreements or merely agreeing to cease hostilities.

Argentina played a role in the armistice process while serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council in 1949. With Argentina’s input, the Security Council settled on agreements that included a “delimitation of armistice lines and provided for the withdrawal and reduction of forces.”<sup>220</sup> However, the armistice lines “were not to be interpreted as having any relationship to the ultimate territorial arrangements to be agreed upon the parties.”<sup>221</sup> Both parties recognized the armistices as temporary injunctions against the war rather than lasting peace agreements. Arabs especially believed the boundary agreements that included the Gaza Strip for Egypt and the West Bank for Jordan to be provisional in nature.

With the fighting over, observers turned their attention to the Palestinian refugee problem, which had ballooned into a humanitarian crisis. The U.N. General Assembly had passed a resolution in December 1948 that had called for Israel to allow the return of those Arab-Palestinians willing to live in peace within Israel’s borders. Yet, that resolution had failed to resolve the dilemma. Arab states continued to demand that Israel allow refugees the right to return, whereas Israel called for a resettlement solution outside of the new Jewish state.<sup>222</sup> In 1949, Arab states once again called on the United Nation to address the issue. This time,

<sup>219</sup> Avi Shlaim, “Israel and the Arab Coalition in 1948,” in *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*, eds. Eugene L. Rogan and Avi Shlaim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 82.

<sup>220</sup> U.S. Congress, *The fourth annual report on the activities of the United Nations and the participation of the United States*, 1950, 38.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 133-134; One of the primary works on the Palestinian Refugee history is Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestine Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

renewed negotiations led to nominal reconciliations. Arab states and Israel expressed willingness to accommodate small numbers of refugees, albeit with enormous conditions. Those conditions prevented any measureable change. The refugee problem persisted largely unabated. Faced with another failure, the U.N. voted to replace its Relief for Palestine Refugees office with new agency. The new United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees streamlined previously disjointed work opportunities and relief efforts.<sup>223</sup> In regards to the Palestine refugee problem, Argentina chose not to abstain, as had become its custom. Instead, Argentina voted in favor of resolutions that pledged financial assistance to Palestinian refugees, called for vague notions of resettlement in Israel, and the reorganization of the U.N.'s outreach program.<sup>224</sup> As non-permanent member of the Security Council, Argentina was under a spotlight and could have maintained its pattern of abstention to avoid attention. Yet, it did not. The Perón administration had demonstrated its continued support for the Arab cause, but limited to humanitarian circumstances. The Argentine representatives in the region, however, faced more than a humanitarian problem. The political dysfunction in the Arab World, along with the loss of Palestine created an atmosphere of frustration and disappointment.

The intense infighting among Arab states emerged as the first significant obstacle for Argentina. The Arab League, considered the “unified authority” for the Arab World, failed to remain a reliable partner for Perón.<sup>225</sup> Some of Argentina’s earliest reports from the region reflected this status. In one transmission, the Argentine envoy reported that an angry Iraqi government had taken exception to the poor treatment extended to Iraqi soldiers who had served in Palestine. Iraqi officials accused, Arab League Secretary General, Egyptian Abdel Rahman

<sup>223</sup> U.S. Congress, *The fourth annual report on the activities of the United Nations and the participation of the United States*, 1950, 42-43.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 133-134.

Azam Pacha, of failing to fulfill financial commitments to those Iraqis who had served in conflict.<sup>226</sup> Whether purposeful or merely an administrative oversight, lack of payment and the subsequent accusations offer an illustration of inter-Arab disunity. Even the war in Palestine could not bring those nations together. Arab nations took greater interest in outside alliances.

The British-backed Hashemite rulers in Jordan and Iraq, and their competitors in Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia comprised the two major, emerging political rivalries in the Arab World. King Abdullah I bin al-Hussein of Jordan emphasized his hopes to reign over a Greater Syria, which would encompass Syria, Palestine, and Jordan. The other Arab nations were fearful and resentful towards the prospects of a Hashemite takeover, largely because of their own personal “ambitions to lead the Arab World.”<sup>227</sup> Scholar James Gelvin concludes that “interstate rivalry undermined the effectiveness of the Arab League.”<sup>228</sup> The rivalries paved the way for foreign powers, paralyzing Arab cooperation, and pushing Argentina towards direct relations with specific Arab countries.

### **State-to-state relations**

Forging relationships directly with national governments became the priority for Perón. This decision, however, did not completely save Argentina from problems in the Arab World. Those Argentine officials now scattered throughout the region relayed back to Buenos Aires lengthy assessments that read like political autopsies. The transmissions described a complicated history of political distrust and ongoing Cold War intervention. More importantly, however, the tone had changed from enthusiasm found in memos from 1947 and 1948 to caution, even

<sup>226</sup>Hector Madero to Juan Atilio Bramuglia, May 14, 1949, División de Política, Iraq, 1949, Box 55, Folder “Política Externa,” AMREC.

<sup>227</sup> Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 132.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid*, 131.



frustration. The ambitious, pro-Arab language that characterized the years leading up to 1949 had turned distant and clinical. Representatives stationed in Saudi Arabia expressed supreme disappointment in the nation's political and social conditions, while those in Egypt and Syria spoke of a volatile atmosphere that stymied diplomatic activities and made for an uncertain future.<sup>229</sup> Years earlier, Perón made a statement that suggested he anticipated those difficulties. Moshe Tov, an Argentine-Jew and the Zionist Movement representative to the United Nations, questioned why the Perón administration had continued to delay recognition of Israel. Perón responded that he (Tov) knew the Arabs and understood that they “tend to become irrational.”<sup>230</sup> With levity, he said that if “I were to recognize Israel today, tomorrow morning the Argentine Ambassador might be hanging from a streetlight or a tree” somewhere in Cairo.<sup>231</sup> In some circumstances, this same sense of caution extended to the United Nations.

Argentine delegates at the United Nations reverted to Argentina's traditional neutrality, in a few cases. The pro-Arab José Arce, now the president of the General Assembly, announced to the Security Council at the beginning of the second session in late 1948 that his government had adopted a “neutral position: neither supporting nor combating partition.”<sup>232</sup> Arce's statement materialized in 1949 as Argentina abstained or remained absent from several key votes concerning the Palestine issue. After demonstrating support for the Arab cause in the November 1947 partition vote, the Argentine delegation abstained on issues, such as the new boundary recommendations proposed by mediator Count Folke Bernadotte and the creation of a Palestine

<sup>229</sup>Codazzi to Guffanti, June 24, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Boletines Informativos de Carácter General,” AMREC; “Informar sobre la actual situación interna de Siria,” Campodónico to Bramuglia, April 5, 1949, División de Política, Syria, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

<sup>230</sup> Moshe Tov, *El murmullo de Israel: historical diplomático* (Jerusalem: 1983), 87.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> José Arce quoted in “Las Naciones Unidas: Consejo de Seguridad,” *Hispano Americano*, XIII (April 9, 1948), 30.

Conciliation Commission.<sup>233</sup> However, Argentina did not completely disengage from Palestine issues. The Argentine delegation remained steadfast on its position to internationalize Jerusalem. Having already given a commitment to Pope Pius XII in October of 1948, the proud Catholic nation kept to its word to support proposals endorsing international authority over the holy places of Christendom.<sup>234</sup> Then, in 1949, Argentina actually won a seat on the United Nations Trusteeship Council, the very council overseeing the Jerusalem jurisdiction issue. The Argentine diplomats played an important role in ensuring that a permanent international regime guaranteed the protection of the Holy City.<sup>235</sup> Additionally, when Israel's bid for membership came to the floor, the Argentine delegation not only voted, but voted in favor of Israel. This move came as a welcome surprise to Israeli delegates who fully expected yet another Argentine abstention. However, this vote was not completely unexpected. Argentina had extended official recognition to the state of Israel earlier that year on February 14, 1949.<sup>236</sup> Nevertheless, recognizing Israel further highlighted Argentina's attempts at appearing neutral.

Perón's pro-Israel decisions, more than anything, served as a symbolic expression of support to the expansion of power among developing nations. The United Nations, which had begun as a 51-member U.N. body in 1945, would grow to 118 members by 1965.<sup>237</sup> This historic international era dovetailed with Perón's goals. Even still, Perón was surprisingly vocal about Israel at a public meeting hosted by leaders of the Argentine Jewish communities following the recognition of Israel. Perón commemorated the occasion and celebrated the moment as a new dawn for the Israeli people. He spoke glowingly of the Jewish people and

<sup>233</sup> United Nations, *Official Records of the Second Special Session of the General Assembly, Resolutions – 16 April to 14 May 1948* (Lake Success, NY: United Nations, 1948).

<sup>234</sup> Klich, "Towards a Arab-Latin American Bloc?," 554.

<sup>235</sup> U.S. Congress, *The fourth annual report on the activities of the United Nations and the participation of the United States*, 1950, 39.

<sup>236</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 75.

<sup>237</sup> Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 166.

openly hoped that peace would emerge between Arabs and Jews.<sup>238</sup> The Perón administration appeared intent on sticking with platitudes and neutral rhetoric on the Palestine question in 1949.

The expressions of neutrality and surprising pro-Israel votes did not equate to an abandonment of Perón's pro-Arab, Third World strategies in the Middle East. Rather, these events provided the opportunity to continue efforts without the burden of politically dangerous pro-Arab pronouncements. The year 1949 is better understood as a refocusing of efforts in Argentine foreign policy. The wildly unpredictable Middle East atmosphere and bureaucratic landscape no doubt curbed Argentina's excitement. Yet the administration's conscious decision to favor relations with particular Arab states that remained hostile to Israel and that expressed opposition to First World alignment revealed that Perón had not strayed from his plan. Prior to 1949, Argentina treated political and social support of the Arab World holistically, as a position to champion publicly on the world stage. In 1949, priorities shifted. A divided Arab World did not require a complete transformation in Argentine policy, but rather realignment in relations favoring those reformist Arab states more compatible to Peron's third position strategies. Argentina pursued those who embraced, if only in appearance, doctrines of self-reliance and reluctance towards First World alignment.

### **Argentine-Jordanian relations**

In the Arab World, natural resources, geography, and history all played a part in defining each nation's respective position in the post-colonial era. Saudi Arabia sat atop massive oil reserves and possessed two of the holiest sites in Islam. Well-known for its rich history, Egypt owned vital Mediterranean ports and contained the all-important Suez Canal. Syria served as the world's crossroads for overland trade, while Iraq survived off the benefits of two rivers

<sup>238</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 75.

dissecting the country, the Tigris and the Euphrates. Transjordan was blessed with few natural resources. The country was, however, within proximity to Jerusalem and already possessed close ties with the First World. Despite little value in the way of commodities or oil, under the reign of King Abdullah, Transjordan became a symbol of Cold War alignment and a flashpoint for inter-Arab World sparing.

Transjordan, as named until December 1948, had cordial relationships with Western governments - namely the British - that predated the Cold War. Those relationships continued largely unabated despite the Israel-Palestine conflict and increased Cold War competition. Jordan's willful drift into the Western sphere of influence, lured by promises of economic and military aid, came as little surprise to regional and international observers. Those reformist Arab states, long suspicious of King Abdullah's ambitions, expressed public and private resentment towards the King's fraternization with Israel. King Abdullah's clandestine negotiations with Israel helped to undermine the pan-Arab resolve against Zionism. The king's aims to rule over a Greater Syria led to "closer coordination with the Zionists than with other Arab states." In fact, Zionists and Jordanians agreed to boundaries before war even erupted, which explained why the Jordanians had "arrayed their forces as peacekeepers...not liberators" and why "virtually no fighting took place between Jordanians and Zionists outside of Jerusalem."<sup>239</sup>

Jordan's conservative tilt played arguably the most important role in shaping Perón's Middle East foreign policy in 1949. Although Jordan had yet to receive diplomatic recognition from Argentina, political decisions in the late 1940s disturbed the Arab position, thus creating a precarious situation for Argentina. In order to navigate through this crisis, Perón made a subtle

<sup>239</sup> Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 132; Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

yet significant decision to accommodate the reformist Arab states over recognition of Jordan. That did not stop King Abdullah, however.

Argentina's good reputation in the Arab World convinced King Abdullah to pursue relations. Jordan's courting of Argentina began immediately after it gained independence in 1946. With a new government in place, the Hashemite rulers quickly sent word to Buenos Aires through its Foreign Minister Muhamad al-Shuriki expressing a desire to establish diplomatic relations. The Argentine government turned to its highly skilled and knowledgeable Ambassador to London, Felipe Espil, for advice. Espil believed that Argentina should employ a "wait-and-see approach." While the Kingdom had the trappings of a stable nation, he wrote, the Argentine government should wait for other leading Arab nations, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to endorse it.<sup>240</sup> The Perón administration took the advice and declined the invitation. After this rejection of the first Jordanian outreach, Argentine diplomatic papers go silent on the topic until 1949.<sup>241</sup> In the interim, others requested recognition from Argentina.

Argentina's diplomatic expansion into the Arab World attracted a host of regional governments in 1949. Many Muslim countries that sought relations with Argentina used the nation's consulates and embassies scattered throughout the region to solicit official relations. As a result, Argentine officials found themselves frequently approached by unrecognized states. Representatives from Afghanistan crossed over their Western border with Iran in March 1949 to request recognition through Argentine representative Eduardo Colombres Marmol.<sup>242</sup> Marmol also fielded similar requests from representatives of Pakistan and Iraq in that same year.<sup>243</sup> On

<sup>240</sup> Klich, "Towards an Argentine-Arab Bloc?," 553.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Pascual la Rosa to Eduardo Colombres Marmol, March 17, 1949, División de Política, Transjordan, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>243</sup> "Memorandum: Para información de S.S. Subsecretario de Relaciones Exteriores," November 30, 1949, División de Política, Iraq, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Externa" 1949, AMREC.

another occasion in 1949, Lebanese officials carried a request on behalf of the Iraqi government to the Argentine legation in Beirut appealing for recognition.<sup>244</sup> Ethiopian officials even tried their hand with Argentine Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Antonio Guffanti during their official visit to Jeddah in May 1949.<sup>245</sup> The unprecedented accessibility to Argentine representatives placed a heavy administrative and political burden on Perón's foreign policy. Like others, King Abdullah took advantage of Argentina's physical presence in neighboring nations and began the courting process anew.

In both March and June of 1949, the Jordanian government sent word through an Iraq representative to the Argentine legation in Tehran, requesting official diplomatic recognition from Argentina.<sup>246</sup> There was no reason to believe the Perón administration would accept the invitation, lest Argentina alienate itself from reformist Arab states and contradict its own rhetoric by aligning with a pro-Western, Third World nation. And as expected, Argentina declined. Abdullah then requested a face-to-face meeting with Argentine diplomat Eduardo Marmol during the King's visit to Iran in August 1949. The king hoped a personal appeal would advance the discussions. Marmol "recommended to his superiors an obliging attitude," considering Brazil's increasing presence in the region and believed that in the "event of Argentine acquiescence," Jordan should acquire a non-resident envoy.<sup>247</sup> However, the face-to-face did nothing to change the situation. The Perón administration refused again. Finally, in his greatest show of diplomacy, the King sent leading Jordanian reporter Teisir Zebian from the *El Yezireh* newspaper to meet with Argentine representative Adolfo Campodoncia in November 1949,

<sup>244</sup> La Legación del Líbano to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto, November 15, 1949, División de Política, Iraq, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Atención de los intereses del Irak por el Líbano," AMREC.

<sup>245</sup> Antonio Guffanti to Bramuglia, "Informar acerca de la instalación de la Legación Diplomática de Etiopía en Arabia Saudita," May 26, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Externa," AMREC.

<sup>246</sup> Guffanti to Bramuglia, "Autoridades del Reino de Transjordania" June 12, 1949, División de Política, Transjordan, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>247</sup> Klich, "Towards a Arab-Latin American Bloc?," 554.

perhaps believing a different audience would produce better results. Zebian, with all the celebratory language common to Arab-Argentine communication, relayed that King Abdullah sincerely wished to visit Argentina at the conclusion of his upcoming travel to the United States. Zebian added that the King also wished to host an Argentine representative in Jordan as a gesture towards diplomatic exchange.<sup>248</sup> The King's persistence did not pay off.

While campaigning for Argentina's recognition, Jordan found itself at odds with several surrounding Arab nations. The situation did not ingratiate Jordan to Argentina. Jordan remained excluded from recognition through 1949 because the nation was politically contaminated. In fact, even the French government, a close ally of Argentina at the time, recommended Perón explore relations with Iraq and but not with Transjordan.<sup>249</sup> Scholar Ignacio Klich sums up Perón's predicament, stating that to "maintain productive relations with the regional powers Argentina was forced to adopt an unsympathetic stance towards Jordan, whose aspirations" troubled other Arab states.<sup>250</sup> Therefore, despite three separate attempts in one year, Jordan remained the most notable Arab outcast in Argentina's otherwise robust work in the Arab World.

Klich's conclusion is an all-too-common misconception in the historiography of Perón's time in office. To characterize Perón as "forced" is misleading. Klich's choice of language suggests that Perón unwillingly aligned more closely with other Arab states. However, the situation only "forced" the Argentine President to delay recognition insomuch as he wanted to stay in the good graces of Syria and Egypt. Jordan complicated Argentina's diplomatic approach, compelling Perón to choose between several political paths. Perón's chosen path opens a window into his closely guarded intentions. The choice to side with reformist Arab

<sup>248</sup> Adolfo Campodonico to Hipolito Jesus Paz, "Informar sobre visita de periodistas transjordanos," División de Política, Transjordan, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Relaciones con la República Argentina," AMREC.

<sup>249</sup> Carlos Alberto Codazzi, March 8, 1949, División de Política, Transjordan, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*

nations suggests the Argentine president hoped to partner with nonaligned-minded governments. In fact, Perón's decision was predictable. Perón's well-known resistance to U.S. hegemony (even if only in appearance) combined with voting patterns at the United Nations reveals a trend an affinity for reformist nations of the Arab World. Perón prized relations with reformist states over conservative ones, because they fit a premeditated agenda, and he pursued those relationships with autonomy and forethought.

On one occasion, Argentina used its position as non-permanent member of the Security Council to offer a resolution recommending Jordan for membership in the United Nations in the Fall of 1949. Opposite from its perfunctory proposal to the General Assembly in 1947, this resolution was a creditable submission to the Security Council. If approved, Jordan would become a member thanks to Argentina. On September 15th, the council voted on the Argentine-sponsored resolution, which also included six other nations. The resolution failed to pass any approvals due to Soviet vetoes. The Soviets offered counter resolutions, but Argentina refused to participate in the voting thereafter.<sup>251</sup> In a true testament to Perón's fluidity in foreign policy, Argentina's refusal to extend diplomatic relations did not mean complete disengagement. The wait-and-see approach of 1946 remained the preferable method with advent of the Cold War and the Arab-Israeli conflict. This approach, however, did not solve Perón's problems. As it turned out, failing to recognize Jordan solved diplomatic issues in the Arab World, but it did not account for Jordan's actions outside the region. Jordan's impact on Argentina's Middle East policy reached beyond the Arab World.

<sup>251</sup> U.S. Congress, *The fourth annual report on the activities of the United Nations and the participation of the United States*, 1950, 91.



### *Argentina, Spain, and Jordanian influence*

King Abdullah aggressively pursued Argentina much like he did other nations during his global quest for international recognition. During 1949, the Jordanian government hastily deployed representatives to numerous nations with the sole purpose of obtaining diplomatic endorsements. Perón recognized that Jordan's global tour could potentially complicate the Cold War as it had already complicated the Arab world. A conservative, First World-connected Arab state could impede, if not undermine Perón's third position strategies. Therefore, Argentina took a special interest in the King's global plans, no doubt hoping to preempt any threats to Argentine objectives. Perón grew anxious when he heard that a close ally, Spain, had emerged as one of Jordan's diplomatic candidates.

In 1949, Franco's Spain found itself globally isolated and nearing at the point of a failed state. The 1930s Civil War, followed closely by World War II, cost many Spanish lives and also stunted the nation's economic development. The poor economic conditions convinced many of Spain's trade partners to reduce their commercial ties, which left the nation on the brink of collapse just as the Cold War began. Western powers had also isolated Spain politically. Franco's reputation as a dictator and his inconsistencies during World War II severely damaged his post-war reputation among the Allied victors. France and the Soviet Union punished Franco by disallowing Spain's entrance into the United Nations and orchestrated a successful diplomatic boycott. President Truman upheld that theme in 1948, declaring Spain ineligible for funds from the Marshall Plan. Francoism was "not welcome in most of the countries of the world...[nor did] Madrid...receive many visitors from abroad" during the late 1940s.<sup>252</sup> Perón seized the moment.

<sup>252</sup> Rein, *The Franco-Perón Alliance*, 5.

Sensing a chance to build upon his third position strategies, Perón decided to fill the economic and diplomatic void crippling the Spanish government. The resultant Franco-Perón alliance provided the diplomatic recognition Spain so desperately sought. The alliance also produced a magnanimous subsistence program in which Argentina provided critical foodstuffs on credit for a Spanish citizenry nearing starvation. Spain offered new, albeit beleaguered, markets for Argentina, which remained excluded from the U.S. trade and cut off from Britain after post-war uncertainty. More than anything else, however, Perón was attracted to Spain's political isolation. The Argentine president believed the Franco-Perón alliance reflected an "expression" of Argentina's third position.<sup>253</sup> Spain provided a "convenient propaganda tool" to prove that "Argentina was indeed pursuing a truly independent foreign policy that was not subject to foreign dictates."<sup>254</sup> Although a financially lopsided arrangement, the Franco-Perón pact offered the appearance of non-alignment without disrupting the Cold War balance.

The alliance faltered in 1949, however. Spain could not repay the generous loans at a moment when Argentina desperately needed money to stave off its own deteriorating economic situation. Among other issues, Perón's modernization programs had drained the country's cash reserves. Without money, Argentina could not exchange its currency for U.S. dollars to purchase critical industrial upgrades for his country's American equipment. King Abdullah happened to be courting Spain at a moment when the Perón-Franco alliance was at its weakest, a serious concern for Argentina.<sup>255</sup>

A Spain-Jordan pact threatened Perón's global activities and Argentina's regional position in the Middle East. If the King and Franco joined forces, Perón would likely be unable to resurrect the pact with Franco and continue to ignore Jordanian requests for recognition.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid*, 113.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

Adding to the complication was Spain's increasingly positive relationship with the United States. Spain's acceptance into the First World would undermine the Perón-Franco alliance, which for Perón was predicated on his non-alignment strategies. More obviously, any change with Jordan would have negative consequences for Argentina's position with the Arab World. It seemed nearly impossible to reaffirm the alliance with Spain and continue to refuse recognition of Jordan.

The hope that Franco might rebuff the King's solicitations faded later that year. Argentine ambassador to Spain Pedro Radio relayed that King Abdullah's visit to Spain had received a tremendous response from the Spanish government and garnered positive attention from the local media. Radio's sources confirmed that Spain's potential alignment with Jordan intended to satisfy Franco's desire to have a foothold in the Middle East. Franco would likely use the position, Radio wrote, to mediate the Palestine conflict and, through that mediation, gain international prestige and earn U.N. membership.<sup>256</sup> To make matters worse, the king would be visiting the United States in November. The Argentine government did not have the same access to information it had in Spain and feared Jordan's intentions would undermine Argentina's Middle East position. In November, the Argentine government sent a frantic secret letter to its representatives in Washington D.C., demanding they gather as much information as possible on King Abdullah's plans and intentions during his visit. The Argentine records hold no response, but the materials reveal a palpable sense of anxiety concerning Jordan's international diplomacy.<sup>257</sup>

<sup>256</sup> Jorge Torrent to Pedro Radio, "Solicitar información," September 17, 1949, División de Política, Transjordan, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Externa" 1949, AMREC.

<sup>257</sup> Departamento De Política to Embargentina – Washington, November 21, 1949, División de Política, Transjordan, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Externa" 1949, AMREC.

Perón had thus far successfully staved off Jordanian advances in favor of Jordan's rival Arab states. However, Spain's budding relationship with the Hashemite Kingdom meant the death-knell to an already faltering Argentine-Spanish relationship. In order to preserve the relationship with Spain, Argentina would have to move away from non-alignment strategies and embrace Jordan; or continue denying Jordan for the sake of Perón's Arab World agenda and likely lose Spain. The Argentine president chose to shun Jordan. While Perón maintained his carefully crafted international reputation of resistance and autonomy, his steadfast policy proved to be a testament of Argentina's support for radical reformist Arab states. The administration chose continue its non-recognition position with Jordan and resorted to a titular relationship with Spain.<sup>258</sup>

### **Saudi Arabia**

The Saudi Kingdom was arguably the best known of the conservative Arab states. The country boasted cordial relationships with many Western powers, especially Great Britain. In fact, Argentine Diplomat Antonio Guffanti observed in 1949 that Saudi Arabia remained "totally controlled by Great Britain."<sup>259</sup> Separately, Saudi Arabia made negligible contributions to the Arab-Israeli conflict, consisting of small auxiliary forces assigned to Egyptian units. Lack of participation resulted negated the need for an armistice agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's cozy relationship with Western democracies and a casual participation in the defense of Palestine projected a conservative image. The Perón administration took this into account as he had with Jordan.

<sup>258</sup> Guffanti to Bramuglia, "Autoridades del Reino de Transjordania" June 12, 1949, División de Política, Transjordan, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>259</sup> Guffanti to Bramuglia, "Remite información referente a Arabia Saudita frente a la situación de Siria," June 17, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Externa," AMREC.

As with Jordan, Perón recognized the power of perception and the impact another Western-oriented Arab state could have on Argentina's non-aligned strategies. However, Perón also understood that, unlike Jordan, Saudi Arabia's nominal regional isolation made it far less threatening to reformist Arab states. In June 1949, American and British ministers balked at Saudi claims that the Kingdom would invade Jordan if King Abdullah attempted to occupy Syria in accordance with his Grand Syrian strategy. Western officials considered the comments to be mere bravado, Guffanti wrote to his superiors, since the Saudi military was in poor condition, and Saudi leadership had never shown an inclination to engage militarily in other conflicts, such as Palestine.<sup>260</sup> This nonthreatening posture projected a safe image to the international community. Despite intense Islamic dogmatism and poor national living standards, Saudi Arabia had become an important force in the Middle East and in the Cold War.

A nation agreeable to both the Arab community and the First World presented Argentina with invaluable opportunities. Saudi Arabia's connections afforded Argentina access to vital Cold War information, critical to maintaining a timely and accurate regional policy. The possibility also existed for expansion in energy exports. Above all else, though, the relationship represented the appearance of political autonomy. Perón could claim another victory in his resistance to Cold War alignment, which would win favor in the eyes of reformist Arab states without threatening First World governments. Regionally, Saudi Arabia's acceptable reputation meant Argentina did not have to reconcile its doctrine of self-determination with Saudi Western alignment, as it had with Jordan. In short, Saudi did not represent the political harm to Perón's third position strategies that Jordan did. Yet, a different set of threats emerged. Argentina faced real prospects of Cold War conflict and faced challenges to its own cultural sensibilities.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

Saudi Arabia presented both safety and risk. By 1949, Saudi Arabia symbolized the volatile and dangerous oil competition fueling the regional Cold War. Given the dominant role Britain played in the Middle East, emerging “U.S. foreign policy virtually guaranteed a competitive relationship with its chief European allies.”<sup>261</sup> For Argentina, the risk of losing credibility among Third World nations paled in comparison to the perils in upsetting the Cold War balance. The reach of the First World and their interests below Saudi Arabian soil meant Argentina would have to continue its Third World outreach without destabilizing Western authority. The multifaceted liabilities inherent in Argentine-Saudi Arabia relations had the potential to harm Perón’s diplomatic ambitions.

The dynamics required acute vigilance on the part of Argentine representatives. Indeed, some of the first reports from Argentine officials in Saudi Arabia described a Cold War far beyond the normal bounds of Soviet-American competition. Resident Minister Antonio Guffanti explained in a lengthy April memo that Saudi Arabia’s growing economic dependency on U.S. oil contracts threatened its historic political allegiance to Great Britain. This reality had driven a wedge between the two countries, Guffanti asserted. “Britain’s margin of petroleum power was being steadily eroded by U.S.-protected international companies in the region.”<sup>262</sup> Both nations were battling for control of the Saudi government in a frightening display of First World infighting.<sup>263</sup> The bitter Anglo-American competition dominated the scene. Perón no doubt hoped to avoid involving Argentina in such a rivalry. However, disengaging meant losing access to information, sacrificing its reputation, and inhibiting Argentina’s hopes of exploiting energy opportunities. Guffanti highlighted this painful truth in a 1949 position paper. Expansive

<sup>261</sup> Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 22.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid*, 39.

<sup>263</sup> Guffanti to Bramuglia, “Rivalidad entre Inglaterra y Estados Unidos en Arabia Saudita,” April 20, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Externa,” AMREC.

American holdings dominated the Saudi oil market, he wrote, and the British influence over Saudi politics proved that any success in negotiating oil exports would require delicate, impossibly precise political maneuvering.<sup>264</sup> First World omnipresence meant Argentina would not be dealing with the Saudi government, but its overseers. Argentina faced seemingly insurmountable odds in procuring energy exports without either inserting itself into unpredictable Cold War rivalries or jeopardizing its own Third World goals. Yet, limited access to energy markets was not the only consequence of the Western presence.

The United States had already mobilized political forces to impede the Soviet advance in the Middle East that had already succeeded in Eastern Europe, China, and parts of Korea. Saudi Arabia became the epitome of Cold War posturing and political positioning, arguably the greatest threat to Argentina's reputation as an independent operator. The great lengths to which the United States and Great Britain went to prevent Soviet political and economic infiltration in Saudi Arabia exemplified just how demanding political alignment had become. Guffanti noted in a secret memo that an ongoing American port project in Jeddah was not for the progress of Muslim citizens as both governments claimed, but designed solely to limit Russian access to the Persian Gulf. The port would also provide quick delivery of American military armaments should Saudi Arabia face a Soviet incursion.<sup>265</sup> Guffanti's account served as a warning to Argentine officials. The escalation in military preparedness for oil security, he claimed, signaled the growing threats to regional stability, which would undermine Argentina's diplomatic endeavors. Guffanti found solace in April of that same year when twelve nations joined forces to

<sup>264</sup> Guffanti, "La Cuestion del Petroleo en el Reino de la Arabia Saudita," September 2, 1949, División de Polítical, Saudi Arabia, 1949 Box 49, Folder "Boletines Informativos de Carácter General," AMREC.

<sup>265</sup> Guffanti to Bramuglia, "Remitir informe secreto sobre la construcción del puerto de Djedda," February 9, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Externa," AMREC.

form the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), an organization built around a unified response to an armed attack against any one member.<sup>266</sup>

Guffanti considered the creation of NATO to be necessary for peace and called it a welcome defense against the “epidemic ideas of communism” whose extensive reach continued to grow throughout the Middle East. This pact proved important since Communists had installed “centers of propaganda” dangerously close to “vital English-American” areas with the intent to exacerbate Arab tensions and take control of petroleum reserves, he wrote. The organization needed to take immediate measures, Guffanti implored; otherwise the situation in Saudi Arabia could quickly become dangerous, “seriously threatening our [Argentina] interests.”<sup>267</sup> Paradoxically, Perón had come to rely on American-led security efforts for the safe implementation of his anti-Yankee, non-aligned doctrine. Despite that irony, the prospects for war in Saudi Arabia left Guffanti unsettled. He frequently reminded supervisors that the stark and divisive environment would not allow for Perón’s fluid political stances. The inability to overcome American energy monopolies and Cold War political conflict explained in part why Argentina’s enthusiasm for Saudi Arabia had waned.

A lesser-known reason for Argentina’s lack of diplomatic enthusiasm related to Saudi Arabia’s conservative social policies. In 1948, the king told Guffanti that Peronism was alive and well in Saudi Arabia. The Arab nation, King Abdullah claimed, possessed a similar spirit of social justice and economic reform. Yet Guffanti’s correspondence from 1949 tells a different story. The first reports after his arrival in 1948 spoke of a poor, stringently religious society.

<sup>266</sup> Guffanti, “Los Pactos del Atlantico Norte y del Mediterraneo ante el Analisis de la Actual Situacion en Arabia Saudita,” División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Externa,” AMREC; U.S. Department of State. “North Atlantic Treaty,” *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America 1776-1949*, vol. 13, ed. Charles Irving Bevans. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1950), 831.

<sup>267</sup> Guffanti, “Los Pactos del Atlantico Norte y del Mediterraneo ante el Analisis de la Actual Situacion en Arabia Saudita,” División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Externa,” AMREC.



After a brief time in-country Guffanti's changed his reports from frustrated to highly critical. He argued that the poor conditions were directly related to the dynastic structure of government and its policies. Guffanti took special exception to Ibn Saud, Monarch of Saudi Arabia, describing him as an "uncultured man" and a "Bedouin guerilla" completely detached from the needs of the people.<sup>268</sup> Then in an April 1949 memo, Guffanti lambasted the Saudi government. Placing his major criticisms in full caps for ultimate effect, the Argentine diplomat angrily wrote that "No political parties exist." He characterized the nation as "without public opinion, without press, without superior schools, without universities, without law" other than the Koran.<sup>269</sup> In fact, the religiosity was so intense that the King had severely curtailed any in-country travel for non-Muslim diplomats.<sup>270</sup> Guffanti claimed that no social justice existed in Saudi Arabia and suggested the King's affinity for Peronism was in word, not deed.

By the summer, Guffanti's criticisms turned to unbridled disgust. He claimed that all aspects of society remained primitive and rudimentary.<sup>271</sup> The country, "if you could call it that," he wrote, showed no signs of improvement in law, freedom, social justice, or public infrastructure.<sup>272</sup> The Argentine Minister saved some of his sharpest criticisms for a June 1949 Associated Press article that claimed Saudi Arabia continued to see societal and economic progress thanks largely to U.S. relations. The article was nothing more than an "infamous hoax," Guffanti wrote, a "disfigured truth of the North American press." Seething with anger after less

<sup>268</sup> Guffanti, "Informe Sobre Política; Evolución de los Partos Políticos y Perspectivas de los Mismos en el Futuro," February, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Externa," AMREC.

<sup>269</sup> Guffanti, "Informe Sobre Política; Evolución de los Partos Políticos y Perspectivas de los Mismos en el Futuro," April, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Externa," AMREC.

<sup>270</sup> Guffanti to Bramuglia, "Diplomáticos prisioneros en Djedda," February 12, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Boletines Informativos de Carácter General," AMREC.

<sup>271</sup> Guffanti, "Informe Sobre Política; Evolución de los Partos Políticos y Perspectivas de los Mismos en el Futuro," June 10, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Externa," AMREC.

<sup>272</sup> Guffanti to Bramuglia, "Acompañar un trabajo referente a 'Extranjeros al servicio del Gobierno de Arabia Saudita'," June 15, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Externa," AMREC.

than a year in Saudi Arabia, the minister requested the Argentine government close the diplomatic station<sup>273</sup>

In a telling clue as to where Saudi Arabia stood in Perón's drift towards reformist Arab states, the Argentine government denied Guffanti's request. Carlos Codazzi, the director of Political Department, wrote back acknowledging the poor conditions and affirmed Guffanti's distaste with Saudi practices. Yet, the Argentine government refused to grant his request on the grounds that relations with Saudi Arabia carried with it broader implications. The Argentine legation, Codazzi responded, allowed the Argentine government to monitor factors related to the "political influences and economic developments" of both United States and Britain, and the "infiltration" of Communist forces. These issues, he continued, helped contextualize similar events in other Arab nations.<sup>274</sup> In essence, the Argentine government considered Saudi Arabia to be a viewing platform, a listening post, for Cold War developments. In the same letter, Codazzi claimed that any disengagement from Saudi Arabia would have negative repercussions throughout the Arab World and further restrict access to U.S.-led petroleum advancements.<sup>275</sup> Compared to Jordan, relations with Saudi Arabia, in spite of First World alignment, actually had redeeming value in the Arab World. The Argentine government seemed no more pleased with the political and social conditions than Guffanti, but Codazzi reminded the minister that relations with Saudi Arabia served a greater purpose than state-to-state diplomacy.

In sum, the representatives acted as the eyes and ears of officials in Buenos Aires. Additionally, Saudi Arabia's acceptable reputation, both regionally and internationally, meant an improved image for Argentina without political sacrifice. Argentina planted itself in a nation rife

<sup>273</sup> Guffanti to Bramuglia, "Desvirtuar la falsedad de una publicación sobre Arabia Saudita, hecha por 'Associated Press'," June 15, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Externa," AMREC.

<sup>274</sup> Codazzi to Guffanti, June 24, 1949, División de Política, Saudi Arabia, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Boletines Informativos de Carácter General," AMREC.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

with Cold War tension without engaging it, in order to boast its Third World credentials to less conservative Arab nations. Perón's 1949 refocusing of efforts witnessed the continuance of Argentina-Saudi Arabia relations even as Argentina discreetly distanced itself from Saudi social conservatism and political alignments. The Kingdom had become a conduit for, rather than a partner in, Argentina's regional endeavors.

### **Syria and Egypt**

The Cold War tensions that had further divided a sullen Arab World apparently convinced Perón to target those nations that expressed resentment towards Western intrusion and that were suspicious of Cold War alignment. While the Perón administration had denied recognition to Jordan and limited relations with Saudi Arabia, it conversely worked hard to expand diplomacy with Syria and Egypt.

Syria represented the developing state Perón coveted. Not only did Syria have a large immigrant population in Argentina, a potential benefit to the Perón administration, but it also boasted an anti-alignment government. The rhetoric coming from Damascus and its struggle against imperial occupation suggested that Syria would likely resist close cooperation with Western, First World governments. And the tremendous uncertainty facing Syria with its brutal, ongoing civil war in 1949 did little to slow Argentina's diplomacy. The Perón administration remained steadfastly committed to Syria, despite political obstacles, and continued to advance Argentina's Third Position prerogatives. The position of the Perón administration in 1949 was clear: the potential rewards were well worth the risks in Syria.

Syria's poor performance in governance during the earliest years of the post-colonial era had roots in previous imperial occupation. Since the close of World War I, the French had

reigned over all aspects of Syrian life, denying any opportunities for self-governance or national formation as a means to protect their financial investments in, among other things, railroads and agriculture. As the “self-proclaimed protector of the Christian communities in the Levant,” the French government segmented the territory into smaller states based on social and political affinities.<sup>276</sup> The government understood that the divisions would help the Christian communities and create competition among Muslims. The fracturing prevented a collective resistance against French rule and temporarily undermined nationalist efforts. Then, as the chaos of World War II subsided, the French government reestablished its authority and reneged on its promises to allow for the formation of local, self-governing authorities in Syria and Lebanon. French President Charles De Gaulle’s “efforts to prolong the mandate structure made the two states [now] more determined than ever to assert their independence.”<sup>277</sup> Syrian nationalism found new life as France, once again, went back on its word. This time Syrians persevered and finally attained freedom when the French government recalled the last remaining troops in 1946. The nascent political structure, however, was ill-equipped for governance. The French mandate period had denied individuals “the opportunity to acquire experience in the practice of self-government and had not prepared them to deal with the challenges that lay ahead.”<sup>278</sup> The remnants of these struggles undermined Perón’s aims.

The hopes Argentina had for Syria in 1948 were dashed by 1949. Nevertheless, newly elected Prime Minister Khaled El Azim espoused goals that reflected the broader anti-alignment trends in Perón’s diplomatic philosophy. According to information received by Argentine official Adolfo Campodónico, Syria’s Prime Minister told Parliament in a secret meeting that his primary objective for the nation centered on strengthening independence through global

<sup>276</sup> Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 230.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

diplomacy. He stated emphatically that his administration would arm the military to defend Syria's territories and borders, and defend the rights of all Arabs. He added that Palestine was "a problem of first order for my government," and that Syria would never accept any division of Palestine and would always work towards the liberty of the region from Zionists. The Prime Minister went on to call for his nation's economic independence through the development of industry and agriculture. Knowing that calls for economic and diplomatic expansion and expressions of sovereignty would resonate with the Perón administration, Campodónico noted that his superiors would find the text of considerable interest.<sup>279</sup> This type of pronouncement, not heard in Jordan or Saudi Arabia, explains in part Perón's tilt towards Syria. Egyptian-Argentine relations had similar potential.

The atmosphere remained tense entering 1949 as Egypt and Israel continued engaging each other with sporadic, low-scale military operations, even as Argentina and Egypt both served as non-permanent members of the Security Council. The threat to the armistice agreement, however, did not seem to faze Argentine official in Cairo, Héctor Madero. As reports on Egyptian bombardments against Tel Aviv and Jerusalem reached Buenos Aires, Madero busily updated the Political Department that King Farouk had begged for a copy of the Argentine-made Ballester Molina pistol.<sup>280</sup> Madero requested the weapon as a gift inscribed with the name of President Juan Perón whom, he claimed, the king "admires and [whose] politics he follows with great interest."<sup>281</sup> It was not until the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli armistice agreement in February 1949 that Madero acknowledged the conflict in his correspondence. He characterized

<sup>279</sup> Adolfo Campodónico to Bramuglia, January 2, 1949, División de Política, Syria, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>280</sup> "Buques Egipcios Bombardearon de Noche a Tel Aviv," *La Nación*, January 2, 1949, División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Interna" AMREC.

<sup>281</sup> Madero to Bramuglia, February 2, 1949, División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Actuación de los Representantes Diplomáticos y Consulares de Egipto" AMREC.

the agreement as “limited in scope,” dealing “exclusively” with military engagements and not meant to resolve the Palestine question. Madero then entered into a lengthy and uplifting account of the Egyptian government’s performance at the negotiations, calling Egyptian representatives cooperative, dignified, and absolute in their decisions. Similarly, Madero claimed that the Egyptian people accepted the truce with “great satisfaction” and expected the authorities to respect the armistice agreement.<sup>282</sup> Madero’s glowing depiction of both the government and an alleged unified citizenry reflected his affinity for Egypt and highlighted the cordiality that defined Egyptian-Argentine relations. Diplomatic officials from all over the world knew, among other things, that the public still remained deeply divided over how to resolve the Palestine question. In fact, some of the most violent reactions over Palestine from anti-Zionist elements occurred in February 1949 after government agents allegedly assassinated the Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al Banna.<sup>283</sup> Whether purposely avoiding the unpleasantness of the situation or simply believing in the merits of his own conclusions, Madero chose to reinforce the notion that Egypt remained a reliable and beneficial partner in the region. This positive language satisfied the Perón administration. With the conflict at a standstill, incorporating Egypt into Perón’s non-aligned strategies became a priority.

By March 1949, Cold War issues overshadowed Argentina’s previous concerns about the Palestine question. In fact, before the ink had dried on the armistice agreement, Madero’s correspondence shifted in topic towards Cold War issues. Likewise, the once jovial tone of Madero’s narratives turned analytical and concerned. The Argentine diplomat neither minimized nor concealed the harsh realities of the encroaching Cold War and argued that the immediate

<sup>282</sup> “Remitir informe armisticio israelita-egipcio,” Madero to Bramuglia, February 25, 1949, División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder “Cuestionario sobre diversos aspectos políticos, remitidos por el Departamento de Política” AMREC.

<sup>283</sup> “Remitir informe sobre el asesinato de el Cheik Hassan El Banna,” Madero to Bramuglia, February 24, 1949 División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder “Política Interna” AMREC.

future of his nation's Middle East diplomacy depended how the circumstances evolved. One major concern for Madero involved Egypt's new commercial agreement with Great Britain signed in early 1949. The treaty put Egypt in a "situation of major economic dependence" on Great Britain, further complicating the evolution of the nation's autonomy.<sup>284</sup> The news, he explained, would prompt a reaction from the scattered Soviet influence in Egypt, and the increased presence of the English would likely inflame a populace increasingly frustrated with the government's policies.<sup>285</sup> The divisions in the Arab World also left openings for foreign exploitation. According to Madero, the Egyptian Prime Minister, who also served as the head of the Arab League, openly criticized the Jordanian government's ambitions for a Grand Syria.<sup>286</sup> King Farouk added his voice as well, warning the Hashemite Kingdom against using the instability in Syria as an opening to implement Kingdom grand project, Madero added. Acting on his authority as the Arab League President, the Prime Minister tried to mediate the disputes in Syria and Lebanon with little effect. Madero believed that mediation was a cover for intrusion. The opportunity served to ensure Egyptian authorities remained intimately close to the happenings in the Levant. Meanwhile, Madero reported that Iraqi representatives continued to bicker among themselves during Arab League meetings and that King Farouk had become enormously unpopular among the members. The political posturing and the internal disputes presented perfect opportunities for continued Cold War manipulation, and if instability continued

<sup>284</sup> "Remitir informe política," Madero to Bramuglia, April 25, 1949, División de Política: Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Boletines Informativos de carácter general" AMREC.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> "Elevar recorte periodistas sobre declaraciones Primer Ministro," Madero to Bramuglia, April 30, 1949, División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

it could have “notable repercussions in Egypt’s political trajectory.”<sup>287</sup> Madero believed that the Arab rivalries required vigilance.<sup>288</sup>

The Perón administration feared that Cold War foes could exploit the instability, create conflict, and alter Egypt’s potential inclination towards non-aligned positions. Any of these possibilities would undermine Perón’s plans. Madero confirmed those fears in the summer of 1949. The United States Treasury Secretary John Synder visited Cairo in August 1949, which Madero interpreted as a U.S. response to spread of communism in Egypt.<sup>289</sup> In fact, the U.S. months earlier began efforts to identify Communist-sympathizing labor unions within Egypt. The U.S. Embassy and the Egyptian government used the identification to divide loyalties and ultimately break the trade union coalition. American officials hoped that dissolving the unions would limit opportunities for Soviet labor exploitation.<sup>290</sup> Meanwhile, the Egyptian government tried to pacify public anger concerning new trade agreements with the British. The government authored laws that would prevent an increased foreign presence in Egypt. In June, Prime Minister Ibrahim Abdel Hadi Pasha’s introduced the tough legislation, which essentially made it illegal for foreign-born individuals to own agricultural lands.<sup>291</sup> Just as the government released details on the law, British forces caught unnamed Egyptians - reportedly supported by the government - trying to infiltrate the British-controlled Suez Canal with the intent to sabotage British military hardware.<sup>292</sup> The incursion reflected a growing anger towards Great Britain’s continued occupation of Egyptian territory. The British had refused to recall their forces from

<sup>287</sup> Madero to Bramuglia, May 24, 1949, División de Política: Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> “Informar sobre visita a Egipto del Ministro del Tesoro de EE.UU. Mr. Synder,” Madero to Paz, August 19, 1949, División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

<sup>290</sup> Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 120.

<sup>291</sup> “Informar sobre proyecto de Ley,” Madero to Bramuglia, May 5, 1949, División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

<sup>292</sup> “Incidente anglo-egipcio,” *La Nación*, June 28, 1949, División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.



the area despite the increasingly volatile rhetoric coming from Cairo. Madero believed the legislation and infiltration of the canal were goading the British into action. Such things would lead to more Cold War intrusion and possible conflict.

Adding to the complication, conflict reignited along the Egypt-Israeli border, according to Argentine media reports. Egyptian officials claimed Israel crossed illegally into Egyptian territory violating the armistice and causing a military confrontation.<sup>293</sup> The skirmish threatened the fragile border peace.

The increased presence of both British and American governments brought the Cold War to new levels. Egypt's emphasis on regaining its sovereignty no doubt pleased the Perón administration, but the regional Cold War meant Egypt would have an even more difficult time distancing itself from its First World reliance. The Cold War tension, Egypt's tough language towards Great Britain, and the potential for war with Israel proved too much for Argentine diplomacy. Perón's plans stalled.

### *Problems in Syria*

Similar problems undermined Argentine relations with Syria. For one, defective leadership plagued Syria. The Perón-esque rhetoric that came from the new government during the first few months of 1949, while pleasing to Argentina, did not compensate for its severe dysfunction. Argentine representative Adolfo Campodónico reported in March that the government had gradually lost the support of the populace after failing to communicate a broader

<sup>293</sup> "Egipto," *La Prensa*, October 2, 1949, División de Política, Egypt, 1949, Box 55, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

governing vision. Changes to the system were haphazard and poorly planned. Thus far, the government operations had been overly “clumsy,” he concluded.<sup>294</sup>

The debilitated political system left Syria open to opportunistic Cold War forces. In one instance, the United States pursued its project to deliver oil from points in the Arab World to the Mediterranean coast through an oil pipeline, known as TAPLINE. The American government, however, had difficulty gaining approval from Syria to lay portions of the line through its territory. Animosity remained over the U.S. position on the Palestine partition. Syria used the issue to deny use of its territory for the project. U.S. officials interpreted the move as a broader bias against Western governments, which, in turn, fostered fears of a “Syro-Soviet marriage of convenience” based on Syria’s “need for arms and Stalin’s desire to fish in troubled waters.”<sup>295</sup> The situation invited Western intervention. In late March 1949, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) helped engineer a bloodless coup that brought known anti-Soviet Army Chief of Staff, Husni Al-Zaim, to power. Two months later, U.S. representatives received the concession from the Syrian government to finish the pipeline.<sup>296</sup>

The new Syrian government immediately faced trouble. Evidence emerged that implicated Jordan and Iraq in the funding and arming of the so-called interior rebel movement in Syria and Lebanon. The reports seemed to validate Syrians’ long-held fears of Hashemite meddling in the Levant, and added that Jordan and Iraq appeared to be merely “responding unconditionally to the directives of [Great Britain].”<sup>297</sup> To complicate matters, Campodónico wrote that Syria was expecting political and military assistance from Egypt, Turkey, and possibly

<sup>294</sup> “Informar sobre la actual situación interna de Siria,” Campodónico to Bramuglia, April 5, 1949, División de Política, Syria, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

<sup>295</sup> Douglas Little, “Cold War and Covert Action: The United States and Syria, 1945-1958,” *The Middle East Journal*, 44:1 (Winter, 1990): 51-75, 54.

<sup>296</sup> Gendzier, *Notes from the Minefield*, 97-98.

<sup>297</sup> Campodónico to Bramuglia, División de Política, Syria, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

the United States to defeat the rebel threat.<sup>298</sup> Argentine sources confirmed in August that, at a minimum, clandestine French and U.S. arms shipments had made it to the Syrian military overland from Turkey.<sup>299</sup> Campodónico predicted that French, U.S., and Egyptian intervention would divide the population and create further social and political instability. He added that the British work with Jordan was intended to provoke a Civil War as an excuse for the British to intervene and reassert their authority in the region.<sup>300</sup> The mixing of Arab conflict and Cold War competition made for an extremely volatile situation and added to the already bleak outlook for Argentina's diplomacy in the Arab World. The disheartening reality of Syria's political life was especially frustrating since the nation represented a potential partner in Perón's broader non-alignment goals.

Nevertheless, Argentina held firm in its support of Syria and its commitment to non-interference. In a secret memo to the new government, the Perón administration plainly stated that the coup did nothing to change Argentina's special relationship with Syria and that the Latin American country would not meddle in their internal politics.<sup>301</sup> The dedication to Syria underscored how important the nation was to Perón's endeavors. The Syrian government also recognized Argentina's unwavering commitment and took advantage of its favorable position in Argentina's foreign policy. In an extraordinary example of diplomatic diligence, Syrian officials offered the Perón administration its own affirmations and reassurances. That April during a meeting with Campodónico, Colonel Zaim repeatedly expressed his nation's affinity for Perón,

<sup>298</sup> "Informar sobre la actualidad política de Siria," Campodónico to Bramuglia, April 28, 1949, División de Política, Siria, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>299</sup> Campodónico to Bramuglia, July 13, 1949, División de Política, Siria, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>300</sup> Campodónico to Bramuglia, September 9, 1949, División de Política, Siria, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>301</sup> La Rosa to Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, April, 1949, División de Polític, Siria, 1949, Box 49, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

calling the Argentine President “an example for the Syrian government.” He stated that the new legislature had already pushed for social and economic reforms like those implemented by Juan and Eva Perón. Campodónico claimed that the colonel intended to include language in the new constitution that would expand women’s rights and institute laws that would improve the well-being of the working class. In perhaps a final tip-of-the-cap to Perón and his anti-Communist philosophies, Campodónico noted that Colonel Zaim had just finished an energetic antiCommunist campaign that resulted in a large number of detentions.<sup>302</sup>

The Syrian Foreign Minister, Minister Emir Adel Arslan, built on Zaim’s momentum by invoking the history of positive relations between the two nations. During a meeting with Campodónico, Arslan reminded the Argentine official that although times were tough, the two nations had always worked together. Arslan asserted that Argentina had been and remained an important ally to Syria and a force for development in the Arab World both in the region and at the United Nations.<sup>303</sup> Local newspapers even hailed the South American country. The periodical *Al-Manar* ran a piece highlighting the history of Syrian immigration history to Argentina and challenging allegations that Argentina harbored Nazis.<sup>304</sup> In another publication, *Al Inkilab* commemorated Argentina’s 139<sup>th</sup> independence celebration, calling the nation “a definite friend” of Syria.<sup>305</sup> No other Arab nation made such efforts to foster a strong relationship with Argentina. Syria’s sensitivity to the importance of Argentina’s presence in the Middle East highlighted Perón’s stature with reformist Arab states.

<sup>302</sup> Campodónico to Bragumlia, April 11, 1949, División de Política, Siria, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

<sup>303</sup> “Comunicar manifestaciones del Ministro de Asuntos Extranjeros de Siria,” Campodónico to Bragumlia, June 13, 1949, División de Política, Siria, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

<sup>304</sup> *El Manar*, February 13, 1949, División de Política, Siria, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Política Interna,” AMREC.

<sup>305</sup> *Al Inkilab*, División de Política, Siria, 1949, Box 49, Folder “Relaciones con la República Argentina,” AMREC.

## Conclusion

The transition in Argentina's foreign policies towards the Arab World from distant ally to official in-country representation in 1949 came at a chaotic moment in the region. Arab nations suffered the demoralizing loss of Palestine and faced uncertain postcolonial transitions to nationhood fraught with political infighting and increased Cold War meddling. Perón's Third World partnership and vision for countering Cold War alignment became frustrated almost as soon as it began. The administration adapted its policies to the circumstances but remained intent on fostering non-aligned cooperation. The increased attention on national governments and avoidance of the Arab League dysfunction allowed Perón to maneuver carefully through the conservative and reformist landscape of Arab politics and Cold War alignment. Argentina had the flexibility to maximize each relationship accordingly and, most importantly, identify those prospective states that reflected Perón's third position policies. Saudi Arabia became a conduit for Argentina's goals, whereas Jordan remained excluded from recognition in hopes of earning greater favor with Syria and Egypt: the two states that emerged as the cornerstones to Perón's project. The year 1949 further confirmed the Argentine government's determination to stay the course despite the uncertainty that gripped the region and the politics surrounding the Palestine issue.

The Palestine dilemma, which had proved so useful at the United Nations for solidifying Arab support, had become a liability. Openly siding with the Arab World, even in defeat, would have undoubtedly given Perón increased clout in the region. However, such a decision would have most certainly caused Argentina further isolation in the international community. The moment underscored that Perón's third position policies could go only so far. The Argentine government was simply more concerned with Cold War implications in the region than the

political benefits of engaging the dispute. Armistice agreements had effectively shelved the Palestine question in favor of Cold War concerns. Unfortunately for Perón's ambitions, Arab politics after 1949 focused on the Palestine conflict. Perón distanced his government from regional issues in favor of a state-to-state diplomacy in hopes of salvaging his project. Nevertheless, Perón's project was in jeopardy at the close of the year.

## Chapter Four – The Trouble of the 1950s

The Cold War of the 1950s proved to be a world of shifting political alliances. Emerging movements of nationalism intersected with the postcolonial discontent of unfulfilled expectations, which together inspired new sources of conflict. As the momentum behind Cold War competition increased, developing nations moved from expressing resentment towards the emerging world order to resisting that order. Many perceived the situation as colonialism revisited. Smaller nations began to champion their sovereignty and openly challenge the Cold War system. Third World states recognized their collective strength and engaged in processes to consolidate their power. Indeed, the 1950s witnessed a second great awakening of the Global South.

The Middle East became the epicenter of this awakening. The region had long been at the forefront of global agendas after years of U.N. activity, Cold War competition, and an emerging pan-Arab movement. Yet, it was the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict that caught the attention of the world. Scholar Damian Fernandez argues that the Arab-Israeli conflict represented “the inherent problems of development” in the postcolonial era, related to the “long-standing challenge of establishing a legitimate nation-state,” and the subsequent distribution of goods and benefits within that state.<sup>306</sup> Similarly, a spider-web of actors and ideologies all linked by polarizing international and domestic issues created the phenomenon of internationalization. The conflict attained a global status because of the high number of participants - both political groups and recognized states – which all had a vested or perceived interest in the dispute.<sup>307</sup> For its part, the Arab World recognized the global interest in the conflict and dispatched representatives throughout the world to gain support for the Palestine

<sup>306</sup> Fernandez, *Central America & the Middle East*, 5

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

cause. As Fernandez writes, “by internationalizing the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Arabs [made] it more immediate to other countries of the world.”<sup>308</sup> The 1950s witnessed an increased awareness of the Palestine dilemma as political groups, governments, and civic organizations from all over the world began adopting political positions towards the conflict. As the Cold War manifested itself in the Middle East during the 1950s, it gave new energy to the Palestine dilemma and aided in its globalization.

Heightened international awareness and the subsequent politicalization of the conflict also fundamentally altered the region’s demographics. Israel entered the period as a fully accredited nation-state, by international standards, having received recognition from a host of nations, as well as membership in the United Nations. This new nation’s success attracted immigrants from around the world. In fact, the Jewish nation doubled its population in the first four years of existence.<sup>309</sup> Meanwhile, the loss of Palestine and the permanency of Israel, accompanied by the rapid escalation of Cold War intrusion, put the Arab World into political disarray. A lack of national or collective identity left conservative and reformist Arab states exposed to varying degrees of First World impositions. This period proved to be perhaps the greatest threat to Arab autonomy in the postcolonial era, laying the groundwork for the second great awakening.

In the early 1950s, a new generation of Arab leaders saw Cold War interference as a type of neocolonialism. The atmosphere inspired these leaders to champion “the policies of anti-imperialism, non-alignment, and state-guided economic development.”<sup>310</sup> The Suez Crisis symbolized that change. Gamal Abd al-Nasser led Egypt in its challenges to the Cold War order by nationalizing the canal, which led to the invasion of Egypt by the British, French, and Israelis.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>309</sup> Gelvin, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 169.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid, 171.



Argentina expressed sympathy for Egypt, but the South American nation found itself preoccupied with a debilitating case of political and economic dysfunction, whose downward spiral began several years before the Suez Crisis.

During the same period, heightened dissent and a worsening financial outlook pushed Argentina to the brink of ruin. The Perón administration found itself slowly losing its grip on authority. The government adopted strategies intended to repair the Argentine economy and society without sacrificing its reputation of nonalignment and domestic power. Consequently, the Perón administration vacillated from one extreme to the other. The government could not satisfy rival constituencies while achieving economic stability and preserving its power. The international community also watched intently as the Argentine government shifted back and forth and back again between aggressive third position policies and first world dependency. Perón ultimately resorted to greater authoritarianism in the wake of disorientating political flip-flopping. Scholar David Sheinin characterized this moment as the end of Argentine democracy.<sup>311</sup> The flurry of dictatorial policies also carried with them consequences that permanently reshaped Argentina's global affairs. Not only did democracy end, but so did the third position and the foreign relations project with Arab World. In the place of the third position, and largely as a consequence of it, arose a domestic conflict between forces tied to Arab-Israeli issues.

The well-documented battles over Perónism that followed the fall of the Argentine President in 1955 help explain the political and economic instability of the late 1950s. Scholarship, however, has overlooked the consequences of Perón's third position, particularly his Middle East policy. In short, Perón's aggressive agenda in the Arab World not only aided in bringing the Palestine conflict to the shores of South America, but unwittingly allowed for it to

<sup>311</sup> David Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States: An Alliance Contained* (Athens: University of Georgia, 2006), 90.

permeate Argentine society. In fact, some of the first glimpses into how internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict impacted Argentina could be seen after the fall of Perón and the Suez Crisis. Perón's immediate legacy is greater than widespread economic failures and political instability, but also the impact of foreign policy on Argentine society.

Perón's Middle East foreign policy was at the center of the political faltering in the 1950s. By the start of the decade, Perón and his lofty ambitions for the Arab World began to collapse under the weight of overlapping conflicts in the Cold War and the Arab-Israeli battles. Adjusting to the circumstances, Perón, having altered policies to accommodate the tumultuous year of 1949, shifted yet again to an ambiguous and largely indiscernible agenda. He waffled between a slow de-escalation and renewed outreach with Arab countries. At the heart of Perón's indecision were Palestine and Argentina's decision to distance itself from the conflict. But, much like Perón's other efforts entering the 1950s, the modifications in policy came too late. The Palestine Dilemma had become internationalized and now operated like a magnetic force that pulled Argentina into its sphere of influence. Famous for winning praise from the Arab World during the Partition debates, the Perón administration now tried to regain domestic power by diverting resources and attention away from Middle East policy.

By mid-decade, the polarizing dynamics swirling around the Palestine conflict began to manifest themselves in Argentine society. The issues of sovereignty and ethnic identity inherent in the Israeli-Palestine conflict resonated with both immigrant communities and nationalist groups, some of whom were already angry with Perón's renewed Western alignment and disillusioned by his unfulfilled promises of reform. Perón's growing dependence on the First World and decreased interest in the issues of Palestine created divisions in the Argentine population. The Argentine President had injected his nation into a Cold War hotspot and now

could not escape it. By trying to distance itself from the conflict, the government brought it closer to home. Argentina could not shield itself from the consequences of foreign policies it had once championed.

### *1950-1951*

The South American nation limped into the 1950s. Drought and economic failings associated with Perón's reforms devastated industry, trade, and social well-being. U.S. reports suggested that nationalized properties, on average, were losing a million pesos a day with no foreseeable improvement. U.S. Ambassador to Argentina Stanton Griffs wrote of the Perón administration that "when a government gives jobs for votes, efficiency flies out the window."<sup>312</sup> Argentina found itself unable to produce enough of its base exports in meat and grain for international trade. Argentina's decline in agricultural productivity and the drop in food exports forced the government to find financial assistance.<sup>313</sup> As a result, the Latin American country found itself dependent on its northern rival.

By the start of the 1950s, the United States had become Argentina's largest customer, while U.S. exports to Argentina reached unprecedented levels.<sup>314</sup> The most visible testament to this dependence came when a reluctant Perón finally accepted the \$125,000,000 loan from the United States, designed to restructure business debts Argentine companies owed U.S. exporters. Much like it had in negotiations with American companies, the administration haggled and dithered for several months before deciding to accept the loan. Perón recognized that to avoid severe austerity measures, he had to obtain financial assistance. The Argentine Ambassador to

<sup>312</sup> Stanton Griffs to President, March 1, 1950, *FRUS*, Vol. II, 1950, *The United Nations; the Western Hemisphere*, 702.

<sup>313</sup> Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 110.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

the U.S. acknowledged as much, admitting that Perón understood his nation's future hinged on its relationship to the United States.<sup>315</sup> In accepting the funds, the Argentine government hoped the capital would improve the climate for foreign investment and pacify a society that had grown frustrated with the administration.<sup>316</sup> Meanwhile, the U.S. government hoped the assistance would create a sense of "hemispheric solidarity" and bring Argentina into "the United States orbit of defense."<sup>317</sup> The Perón government insisted, however, on maintaining appearances of autonomy.

The administration aimed to project an image that, in spite of America's financial assistance, reflected complete sovereignty. The administration made its point by refusing to return U.S. property it had expropriated during Perón's nationalization programs. Those American businesses that had avoided this government takeover, such as Swift International Armour meatpacking, met impossible regulations. Business leaders feared significant losses since they had trouble adhering to the inconsistent and unpredictable enforcement of regulatory policies. Company officials asked the United States "to determine exactly where [U.S. companies stood] and...the real intent of the Argentine government toward them."<sup>318</sup> American oil companies expressed particular concern. The Perón administration's unfavorable attitude towards foreign companies caused oil managers to wonder out loud whether they would be expropriated or "starved to death through attrition methods."<sup>319</sup> The loan had did not seem to have changed Perón's treatment of foreign economic interests.

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 480-481.

<sup>317</sup> Griffs to the Department of State, March 17, 1950, *FRUS*, vol. II, 1950, *The United Nations; the Western Hemisphere*, 706.

<sup>318</sup> Ambassador Griffs memo to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, "Matters to be Discussed with President Perón," February 15, 1950, *FRUS*, vol. II, 1950, *The United Nations; the Western Hemisphere*, 694.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

American officials confronts a similar type of behavior. In one particular incident, U.S. Ambassador Griffs related to the Department of State that despite two urgent requests of President Perón to announce his support for ratifying the Rio Pact, the Argentine Minister Hipólito Jesús Paz had simply failed to give Perón the message.<sup>320</sup> The increasing unreliability prompted a visit from the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Edward Miller in March 1950. During the lengthy stopover, Miller held rolling meetings with President Perón on a range of topics including cooperation against communism and economic assistance. The Argentine leader, in traditional fashion, seemed to agree with unquestionable certainty. Perón was intent on saying that which would assuage American fears.<sup>321</sup> It worked. Griffs considered the visit a success. The ambassador and others in attendance came to believe that Perón was now more pliable to the U.S. policy than they had come to expect.<sup>322</sup>

The appeasement of U.S. officials meant that financial aid would continue to flow into Argentina. However, accepting foreign money suggested that Argentina had sacrificed its treasured reputation of self-reliance. Perón then resumed his public criticism of the United States in order to contain the anger of some Argentines incensed at the increase in foreign influence. The tone angered U.S. officials. Scholar David Sheinin explains that Perón tried “to reconcile with Washington” and hoped to reach a “quiet understanding” with the U.S. government to improve relations. Yet, Perón refused “to tone down the rhetoric which Washington found anathema to sound bilateral ties.”<sup>323</sup> Perón understood that many of his supporters remained hostile to foreign intercession, namely that of the United States, and the

<sup>320</sup> Ambassador Griffs, Memorandum of Conversation between Economic and Finance Advisor of the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, “Argentina,” February 9, 1950, *FRUS*, vol. II, 1950, *The United Nations; the Western Hemisphere*, 692.

<sup>321</sup> Ambassador Griffs to the Department of State, March 1, 1950, *FRUS*, vol. II, 1950, *The United Nations; the Western Hemisphere*, 696, 701.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>323</sup> Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States*, 92.

administration's "rapid reversal" in policy now favoring foreign economic assistance undercut its credibility.<sup>324</sup> Maintaining power meant Perón had to ensure that the latest, most visible examples of U.S. dependence did not foment rebellion. Unfortunately for the Argentine leader, years of boasting self sufficiency and championing nationalization projects made that nearly impossible. Ambassador Griffs summed up the President's predicament stating that undeniable assistance made any attempt to use "[his typical] escape clause from all subjects regarding U.S.-Argentine relations" inherently problematic.<sup>325</sup> A second U.S. report concluded that, nevertheless, Perón held firm to his "tongue-and-cheek attitude," which permitted him "to reverse [his] friendly feeling" and blame the United States for his nation's many ills should domestic trouble call for it.<sup>326</sup> In fact, Perón conceded as much during Edward Miller's visit in 1950. After being pressed about changing his belligerent language about the United States, a frustrated Perón thundered, "Damn it, can't you people realize that certain things are said for local consumption?"<sup>327</sup> In short, Perón continued to rely on distortion and evasion as a means of obscuring changes in policy which could cost him his position.

Those carefully cultivated strategies which had proven successful for years, however, began to lose their refinement. What was once thoughtful evasiveness became narratives of convenience. One of the first instances of this heedlessness came when the Argentine President refused to acknowledge U.S. assistance as a loan. He instead insisted that the financial relief be termed a credit. The maneuver appeared as a weak attempt to control the message that Argentina was not dependent on the United States. Here Perón hoped superficial semantics would stave off

<sup>324</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>325</sup> Ambassador Griffs, "Matters to be Discussed with President Perón," *FRUS*, vol. II, 1950, *The United Nations; the Western Hemisphere*, 695.

<sup>326</sup> Griffs to the Department of State, March 1, 1950, *FRUS*, vol. II, 1950, *The United Nations; the Western Hemisphere*, 701.

<sup>327</sup> Juan Perón quoted in Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States*, 105.

resistance from nationalist supporters and, by all accounts, it succeeded. A second test came with the advent of the Korean War. By accepting the loan, Perón imposed certain expectations on Argentina's state-to-state diplomacy. Here, dependency on the United States demanded the Argentina assume new levels of support for its benefactor. And assistance brought with it certain expectations. Warfare, in particular, allowed very little space for negotiation. Argentina experienced this dilemma firsthand, after isolation by the international community for its prolonged neutrality during World War II. And unlike past instances with the United States, Perón could not deploy his famous escape clause or behind the scenes agreements of cooperation. Joseph Tulchin writes that Perón had no choice but to “change both the tone and the substance of his foreign policies.”<sup>328</sup> But some in the Argentine population fought that change. Perón initially committed peacekeeping forces to U.S.-led coalition in Korea, but the “move stirred the Radicals and the civilian nationalists to vocal complaint.” Harold Peterson writes that:

Compliance [with the U.S.] in the form of active participation [in Korea] would contradict a time-tested Argentine policy and arouse opposition from his Radical critics and nationalist supporters. [Yet] Less than hearty cooperation with UN and OAS calls for assistance might [hurt its reputation and thereby] jeopardize his nation's already weakened economy. [Then again joining] offered the prospect of increased demand for Argentine [military] products and escape from mounting economic troubles.<sup>329</sup>

In light of the complicated situation, the Perón administration reversed course and sent only minor contributions of foodstuffs to the warfront. The “honeymoon” with the United States ended as soon as it had begun.<sup>330</sup> The moment suggested that Perón had lost his ability to adopt creatively unpopular strategies and maintain power without sacrificing the dogma that defined

<sup>328</sup> Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 110.

<sup>329</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 481.

<sup>330</sup> Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 110.

his administration. More broadly, the decision proved that by accepting U.S. aid, the Argentine President had crossed a domestic line of no return.

## **The Arab World**

The Middle East had become an extremely hostile place for a faltering Argentine agenda. The creation of Israel and the large number of displaced Arabs from Palestine angered Arab populations throughout the region as reprisals against Jewish citizens living in predominately Arab nations ensued. After the signing of armistice agreements, over 400,000 Jews, seeking to avoid persecution, escaped to Israel from places like Syria, Egypt, and Yemen.<sup>331</sup> Meanwhile, Western governments continued to assert their political domination in the region with the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, which disallowed weapon shipments to Middle East countries. The declaration did, however, allow for reasonable levels of self-defense forces. France, Great Britain, and the United States, the authors of the agreement, hoped the pact would create greater stability, orient Middle East nations towards Western governments, and limit opportunities for Soviet expansion. The United States, in particular, hoped the agreement would foster a broader movement of U.S.-Arab solidarity against Soviet aggression in Korea.<sup>332</sup> The declaration created the desired effect by half. The joint agreement appeared to undermine briefly Communist advances in the region, but it did little to generate greater stability.

A series of coups during the late 1940s redefined the way forward for the Arab World in the 1950s. “These coups,” James Gelvin writes, “brought to power a new generation of Arab leaders who...increasingly championed the policies of anti-imperialism, nonalignment, and state-

<sup>331</sup> Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 169.

<sup>332</sup> Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israel Wars*, 148-149; Gendzier, *Notes From the Minefield*, 132-133.



guided economic development.”<sup>333</sup> A new brand of Arab nationalism had emerged, undergirded by a hatred for Israel and disenchantment with dynastic rule. The movement had a secular, pan-Arab flavor that emphasized resistance to foreign power and economic autonomy over traditional interlocutors like religion or language.<sup>334</sup> Had these leaders risen earlier, Perón may have exceeded his own expectations in creating a community of likeminded, nonaligned nations within the developing world. Yet, the window of opportunity was closing fast on Perón’s third position endeavors. Domestic problems limited the nation’s international options, and the increased turmoil in the Middle East tempered what little enthusiasm remained for Perón’s agenda with the Arab World.

### *Argentina and Egypt*

The growing instability in Argentina emerged around the same moment that Perón’s foreign policy strategies in the Arab World faced their greatest challenges. Egypt, a critical partner in Argentina’s work in the Middle East, showed signs of decline in both its regional influence and government authority. Argentine authorities reported that Egypt watched helplessly as Iran recognized Israel, becoming the second nation in the greater Muslim World to do so after Turkey. The decision was a sharp deviation from Iran’s votes against both Israel in the partition debates and the Jewish state’s admission into the United Nations.<sup>335</sup> Argentine envoy to Egypt Guillermo Speróni explained that the diplomatic move undermined anti-Israeli unity among majority-Muslim nations, but since Iran was not part of the Arab League, Egyptian

<sup>333</sup> Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 169.

<sup>334</sup> Owendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israel Wars*, 149-150.

<sup>335</sup> Trita Parsi, *Treacherous Alliance: The Secret Dealings of Israel, Iran, and the United States* (Hartford: Yale University Press, 2008), 19-29.

authorities resorted to simple expressions of disappointment.<sup>336</sup> Egypt could not offer a similar response to Jordan's annexation of Palestine.

Speróni's observations made clear that the Cold War and Jordan would continue to impair Argentina's third position strategies. The Argentine diplomat informed the Perón administration in April 1950 that King Abdullah's partitioned annexation of Palestine had severely fractured what little cooperation remained among Arabs. Moreover, the King's brazen move came under the "benevolent watch" of Great Britain, he added.<sup>337</sup> Then, an emboldened King Abdullah followed his takeover with caustic, verbal attacks against Egypt. Speróni relayed to officials in Buenos Aires that the King of Jordan celebrated his acquisition of Palestine with public denouncements of Egypt, calling it an African country without an understanding of the Arab cause and, thus, without merits to lead the Arab World. He continued by saying that the inflammatory remarks underscored both the growing volatility between Arab powers and the influence of Cold War forces. Cold War alliances brought rivalries within the Arab World to a new level, and the Arab League, the last possibility for inter-Arab cooperation, suffered because of it, Speróni concluded.<sup>338</sup>

Egypt also faced problems within its own government. The dissatisfaction with the current leadership among the younger generation of government leaders posed serious problems for Argentine diplomacy. "The conduct of the war against Israel," Ritchie Ovendale writes, "convinced the young officers that their rulers should be replaced."<sup>339</sup> Gamal Abdul Nasser's election to the Free Officers' Executive Committee in 1950 represented the coming change and

<sup>336</sup> Speróni to Hipólito Jesús Paz, April 25, 1950, División de Política, Egypt, Box 2, Folder "Actuación de los representantes diplomáticos y consulares de Egipto," AMREC.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Speróni to Hipólito Jesús Paz, April 29, 1950, División de Política, Egypt, Box 2, Folder "Actuación de los representantes diplomáticos y consulares de Egipto," AMREC.

<sup>339</sup> Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Wars*, 150.

set the stage for takeover. The political infighting between senior leaders of the British-backed Mustafa al-Nahhas Pasha and those loyal to King Farouk also paved the way for change. This cloud of uncertainty hampered Egypt's talks with Argentina to find a permanent place in Buenos Aires for an Egyptian consul. Speróni believed that the success of the project depended on the pending reorganization within the Egyptian government. He relayed that friction was high between rival political parties and added that the Egyptian government expressed frustration with the Perón administration's delay in agreeing to Egypt's newest diplomat to Argentina. The lag was straining the relationship, he concluded bluntly.<sup>340</sup> Whether the instability plaguing the government in Cairo gave the Perón administration pause or whether the Argentine government had simply performed inefficiently remains unknown. Nonetheless, Argentina gave priority to other matters. This shift in priority does not mean, though, that Perón disregarded the relationship altogether.

From Buenos Aires, the Argentine government did what it believed it could to affirm its commitment to Egypt. Perón openly praised the Egyptian government as a friend in the region and expressed dismay over the possibility that anti-government groups would remove the current leadership from power.<sup>341</sup> The Perón administration also tried to control any negative messaging regarding its relationship with Egypt. Internal communication between the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Interior revealed that the government made a point to assail a June 1950 article in the English language newspaper, *The Standard*, which portrayed King Farouk in an unfavorable light. Argentine officials called the article provocative and expressed frustration at its publication. Over the span of a month, the Perón administration regularly attacked the article,

<sup>340</sup> Speróni to Paz, October 23, 1950, División de Política, Egypt, Box 2, Folder "Actuación de los representantes diplomáticos y consulares de Egipto," AMREC.

<sup>341</sup> Paz to Speróni, September 19, 1950, División de Política, Egypt, Box 2, Folder "Actuación de los representantes diplomáticos y consulares de Egipto," AMREC.

calling its conclusions blatantly incorrect and characterizing the decision to publish the piece as unhelpful to its ongoing relationship.<sup>342</sup> Although the Perón administration took no punitive action, government officials dedicated a surprising amount of time to the article, which suggested that Perón felt his power slipping. In fact, this reaction was not anomalous. In March 1950, the *Chicago Times* wrote that the Perón administration had “seized all newsprint entering the country and reallocated it among newspapers from a pool controlled by the presidential press office.”<sup>343</sup> The same article noted that the Perón administration had also taken action against *La Prensa*, an independent Argentine newspaper critical of Perón, by barring the paper “from importing its own newsprint and machinery.” The decree essentially shut down all operations.<sup>344</sup>

While the situation suggested that Egypt remained an important partner in Perón’s third position agenda, it also demonstrated that Perón could do little more than attempt to control information in order to keep the relationship afloat. In truth, Perón’s limited political capital and the turmoil in the Middle East left the government with little appetite for deeper connections with Egypt. Moreover, Argentina had no real economic resources to offer. The best Perón could do for his Egyptian ally was intimidate those with opposing views and project an image of solidarity with the hopes that appearances would suffice.

As the Perón administration settled on a combination of words of affirmation and domestic authoritarianism, Speróni offered more risky solutions in an attempt to improve the situation. Sensing an opportunity, the Argentine envoy informed his superiors that the British had halted weapons shipments to Egypt because they feared armaments might encourage nationalist sentiments. The Argentine diplomat thought his country could fill the void. “Without

<sup>342</sup> Carlos Zamboni to Raul Alejandro Apolo, June 4, 1950, División de Política, Egypt, Box 2, Folder “Actuación de los representantes diplomáticos y consulares de Egipto,” AMREC.

<sup>343</sup> “Shut Newsprint Mart to Paper Opposing Perón,” March 10, 1950, *Chicago Times*.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

knowing the exact level of production...in Córdoba,” Speróni wrote in September 1950, “...does the possibility exist for our country to export [military] material?”<sup>345</sup> Córdoba province was the home to Argentina’s combat aircraft manufacturing. Speróni expressed a particular desire for aircraft, believing that such a gesture would affirm the friendship more than a few boxes of small arms.<sup>346</sup> However, Argentine officials took an incredible amount of time in sending a response. A full six months passed before Speróni finally received word that Argentina could not provide the materials. “The Aeronautic Ministry is not in the condition to consider the sale of planes to foreign countries,” the response read. The aircraft in production were “committed to satisfying nation’s defense needs.”<sup>347</sup> In fact, budgetary austerity measures had forced Argentina to scrap future production of its prized military aircraft, the Pulqui II.<sup>348</sup> Notwithstanding that Cold War pressure would have dissuaded Argentina from such a bold exchange, Perón’s self-inflicted economic conditions had already limited export opportunities. The relationship with Egypt represented the faltering of Perón’s third position goals with the Arab World.

### *Argentina and Syria*

The disappointing state of affairs in Argentina did not depress Syria’s enthusiasm. The other cornerstone to Perón’s agenda in the Middle East, Syria remained committed to diplomatic cooperation. That dedication resulted in the first visit from a high-ranking Argentine official since Perón began outreach to the Arab World. A delighted Syrian government welcomed a senator of the Argentine congress, Luis Diego Molinari, in January 1950 as the keynote speaker

<sup>345</sup> Speróni to Paz, September 14, 1950, División de Política, Egypt, Box 2, Folder “Actuación de los representantes diplomáticos y consulares de Egipto,” AMREC.

<sup>346</sup> Klich, “Equidistance and Gradualism,” 223.

<sup>347</sup> Eduardo D. Doza to Speróni, División de Política, Egypt, Box 2, Folder “Actuación de los representantes diplomáticos y consulares de Egipto,” AMREC.

<sup>348</sup> Klich, “Equidistance and Gradualism...,” 227.

for a conference on the study of Perónism. Molinari spoke to a diverse audience of students, diplomats, and professors explaining in detail the doctrine and principles that inspired the actions of Juan Perón. Argentine Consul Jorge Ramón Zamudio Silva considered the conference to be a great success, noting that Molinari received applause frequently throughout his lecture.<sup>349</sup> Syria's flattery of Argentina did stop there. The very next month, Syrian leadership awarded Perón the Grand Order of the Umayyads, which Silva called the "highest honor given in Syria."<sup>350</sup> The award commemorated the fourth anniversary of Perón's election and coincided with Argentina's Independence Day.<sup>351</sup> Then in June, the Constitutional Assembly – the legislative body in Syria – approved an order by the government to rename a main street in Damascus after Argentina. A Syrian official, Abdel Latif Yunes, explained that the project represented Syrian gratitude for Argentina's commitment to the Arab World. "When Arabs lost friends in the east and the west," Yunes proclaimed in a speech to the assembly, "Argentina was the first state to answer the call of duty...by sticking to the Arab side in the United Nations."<sup>352</sup> Much as it had done in 1949, Syria employed historical memory as a means to solidify its relations with Argentina. The adulations, however, could not erase the increased political and social turmoil within Syria and the Arab World.

Syria had become a territory engaged in tense relationships with surrounding states, a society weakened by rival religious sects, and a political system plagued with dangerous infighting and competing foreign interests. In fact, American and European fears of Soviet encroachment had inspired their increased involvement in local affairs. Argentine envoy to Syria

<sup>349</sup> Jorge Ramón Zamudio Silva to Paz, March 3, 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>350</sup> Silva to Paz, February 25, 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> Abdel Latif Yunes quoted in Campodónico to Paz, July 4, 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

Adolfo Campodónico expressed worry in a February memo explaining that Syria faced yet another potential coup, this time against the leader of the General Assembly.<sup>353</sup> The forcible changes in leadership, he wrote, continued to undermine political stability, already an issue due to Palestine refugees and fears of Jordanian ambitions.<sup>354</sup> In fact, Campodónico explained that although Jordan's peace with Israel alienated it from the Arab League, its ties to England provided King Abdullah the necessary backing to annex parts of Palestine without fear of reprisal from other Arab states. Syria, he concluded, was caught in the middle by allowing a French, American, and British presence, but refusing to accept Jordan's expanding power. Syria's connection to the First World had become a risky and complex Cold War alignment.<sup>355</sup>

Argentina tried to remain above the Arab disunity and not affirm Cold War alliances by sending Molinari to Jordan immediately after departing Syria. Following his speech in Damascus, Molinari traveled to Amman where he met with several Jordanian officials, including King Abdullah. The Minister of Foreign Relations, Rouhi Pachá Abdulhadi, called Argentina a great friend to the Arabs and, refusing to let the opportunity pass, requested the two nations establish official relations. Molinari responded with a delicate answer, stating that he wished the same and that those officials stationed in the region were currently studying the issue.<sup>356</sup> The complicated Cold War landscape and Argentina's shrinking international capabilities, however, suggested that Perón had significant changes planned. And unfortunately for the Perón administration, Jordan's place in the Arab World was not the only rivalry disrupting unity.

<sup>353</sup> Campodónico to Paz, February 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>354</sup> Campodónico to Paz, April 26, 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>355</sup> Campodónico to Paz, July 5, 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC; Gendzier, *Notes from a Minefield*, 30-31.

<sup>356</sup> Campodónico to Paz, February 19, 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

At odds since their respective independence in 1948, Syria and Lebanon had grown increasingly hostile over trade routes and access to regional distribution of goods.<sup>357</sup> Campodónico stated plainly that the rivalry had reached crisis levels. Moreover, Cold War competition had inflamed the rivalry as foreign governments vied for influence in both countries. The overlapping hostilities seriously threatened Argentina's work, he stated bluntly.<sup>358</sup> In fact, Argentina had unwittingly emerged as a pawn in the tense competition. Not only had Syria's courting earned a visit from a high-ranking Argentine official, but it also caught the attention of the opposing government in Beirut. The Associated Press reported in April 1950 that on a visit to Buenos Aires Lebanese Foreign Minister Phillippe Takla Bey presented Juan and Eva Perón with the Decoration of Merit of the Republic of Lebanon. Dr. Bey pinned the medals on President and Eva Perón during a ceremony which included speeches from both leaders praising the friendship between Argentina and Lebanon.<sup>359</sup> Syria then moved beyond flattery in November 1951 when its chief of staff, Adib Shishakli, approached Campodónico to request Argentine armaments. Shishakli expressed particular interest in tanks and combat jets since the Europeans had rejected his requests for equipment. "Apparently trying to stimulate Argentine interest," scholar Ignacio Klich writes, "Shisakli also mentioned that if Argentina would agree to sell her at least two such airplanes, Syria might consider dumping the three European suppliers and placing future orders for light weapons with Argentina."<sup>360</sup> The available evidence suggests Argentina refused the overture. But an unwillingness to fulfill the request did not distance Argentina from the costly diplomacy of the Middle East. Arab nations kept pulling Argentina closer. Israel did as well.

<sup>357</sup> Silva to Paz, March 31, 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>358</sup> Silva to Paz, March 12, 1950, División de Política, Syria, 1950, Box 7, Folder "Política Interna," AMREC.

<sup>359</sup> "Lebanese Award to Pres. Perón," *Associated Press*, April 30, 1950.

<sup>360</sup> Klich, "Equidistance and Gradualism," 224.



## *Argentina and Israel*

Perón, in perhaps an attempt to further his image of neutrality in the Palestine conflict or maybe to win greater support from Jewish-Argentine communities, began revisiting his policies towards Israel. This change emerged around the same time that Argentina signed economic agreements with the United States and just as Arab states had ramped up their own diplomatic efforts with Argentina. Despite Perón's extensive work in the Arab World and his administration's flashes of anti-Semitism, relations with Israel suddenly and unexplainably became a major focus in his Middle East foreign policy. In fact, available evidence suggests Israel preceded Arab nations in acquiring Argentine armaments. Sometime after Argentina recognized Israel in February 1949, Israeli officials established export agreements with a group headed by a retired Argentine army officer of Jewish descent, Bernardo Weinstein, who clandestinely conducted weapons transfers, supposedly with the full knowledge of the Argentine government. The deliveries, according to one source, proved important for Israel.<sup>361</sup> The quiet weapons deals, however, were an aside to Argentina's overt diplomacy.

The South American nation signed a \$10 million trade agreement with Israel in April 1950, and although the contract was monetarily small, Perón celebrated the agreement with tremendous pomp and ceremony. The deal had come on the heels of Molinari's visit with Israeli officials in March 1950. The Argentine senator - originally scheduled to visit only Arab and Muslim countries - added a stop in Israel after a last minute request from the Israeli foreign minister. The Israeli government met Molinari with great fanfare, treating him as a guest of state and giving him an opportunity to speak at the Hebrew University. Two months after Molinari's return to Argentina, Perón elevated Israel's "*de jure* recognition" status to full diplomatic relations and quickly followed that by opening a diplomatic legation in Tel Aviv, the first Latin

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid*, 226-228.

American country to do so.<sup>362</sup> Knesset speaker Yosef Sprintzak happened to be traveling through South America that May and used the occasion to visit Buenos Aires in order to commemorate the diplomatic upgrade. The Perón administration afforded Sprintzak all the luxuries of a state visit. Among other celebratory moments, the Israeli delegate received a personal meeting with the president, while the Argentine Congress held a special session in his honor.<sup>363</sup>

The escalation in relations with Israel rivaled the intensity of Perón's earlier outreach to the Arab World. Argentina was now the first Latin American country to open offices in both Israel and certain Arab countries. More importantly, however, the mood towards Israel - one that frustrated Arab allies - underscored a distinct shift towards a less polarizing foreign policy. Between accepting U.S. economic aid and upgrading relations with Israel, Perón had singlehandedly changed both the tone and direction of his third position agenda. For unknown reasons, Perón was now projecting a more palatable image to the international community and de-escalating his once aggressive policy towards the Arab World. The Argentine diplomat in Beirut attempted to appease Arab partners blindsided by the decision, claiming his country would not maintain trade relations with Israel.<sup>364</sup> Even the most novice observer understood this comment intended to placate Arab allies since Perón had indeed changed policy. Even that would not last, though.

## **1952-1955**

After his election victory in November 1951 - made possible after he rewrote the constitution allowing for a second term - Perón responded harshly to a world that appeared to be

<sup>362</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 114.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid*, 115-117.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid*, 115.

slipping from his grasp. Continued economic degradation and international impotence seemed to have left him vulnerable. Perón attempted one last time to resurrect an image of autonomy and revive his third position goals. The revival proved costly. Arabs and Israelis used the opening to reinforce their political positions in Argentina, and as a result, the Palestine conflict manifested itself in Argentina. In the ensuing turmoil, Perón embraced his dictatorial instincts and implemented policies that precipitated his downfall.

Following a brief period of acquiescence to U.S. power, Perón returned to a pattern of challenging American hegemony in 1952. The Perón administration feared losing its image of resistance that had for years satisfied nationalist elements within Argentine society. The dependence on foreign capital and growing social discontent convinced Perón to employ old tactics. The U.S. recognized the resurgence of a combative Argentina. American policy makers interpreted Perón's 1950 takeover of *La Prensa* and claims of achieving a certain level of atomic energy independence as overt "challenge[s] [to] the leadership of the United States in Latin America."<sup>365</sup> Perón quickly confirmed those conclusions by reverting to anti-U.S. sentiment. In a 1952 May Day speech, the Argentine president attacked the American media for supposedly spreading lies about him. To combat the perceived falsehoods, Perón disallowed the circulation of news reports from U.S. agencies and banned other popular media outlets.<sup>366</sup> American security analysts believed that Perón's dictatorial behavior proved the re-emergence of deep-seated, anti-U.S. sentiments.<sup>367</sup> Perón proved analysts right by joining the Soviets in an unprecedented trade agreement in August 1952.

In the spirit of renewed antagonism towards the United States, Perón moved beyond nonalignment to the shock of the American government. Perón sent Argentine Ambassador

<sup>365</sup> U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1951, *National security affairs; foreign economic policy*, 79.

<sup>366</sup> Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 110.

<sup>367</sup> U.S. Department of State, *FRUS*, 1951, *National security affairs; foreign economic policy*, 207.

Leopoldo Bravo to meet with Joseph Stalin in the early part of 1952 to discuss the trade pact. Scholar Joseph Tulchin calls the moment “historic” since the meeting and the treaty that came from it were the first of their kind between the Soviets and a Latin American country.<sup>368</sup> Perón proved that Argentina still had the capability for unprecedented, unilateral diplomatic maneuvers. The U.S. feared that the treaty, coupled with the escalation in anti-American rhetoric, meant *Perónism* was now operating as a cover for communism.<sup>369</sup> In reality, the trade contract never amounted to more than 3 percent of Argentine exports, even though Argentina imported much more from the Soviet Union. Perón also quietly reassured U.S. officials that if the Cold War erupted into armed conflict Argentina would side with the United States.<sup>370</sup> Simply put, Tulchin writes, “It was impossible for Perón to rely on [financial assistance from] the USSR.” The small-scale results also proved that Perón’s third position now amounted to a “sincere (if misguided) belief that Argentina still had a future as a world power.”<sup>371</sup>

### *The Arab World*

The Arab World believed Argentina still had a future as an international power. In a January 1954 session, the Arab League made a formal declaration to pursue aggressive diplomatic representation in Latin America, similar to its current policy with the Asian-African bloc.<sup>372</sup> The Arab League followed through on its declaration deploying the first emissary to Buenos Aires in 1956. Around the same time, the Perón administration’s representatives in Cairo invited Mr. Mohamed Abdul Khalek Hassouna, then general secretary of the Arab League,

<sup>368</sup> Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 110.

<sup>369</sup> Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States*, 106.

<sup>370</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 121.

<sup>371</sup> Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 109.

<sup>372</sup> “Co-Operation between the States of the Arab League and the States of the Asian-African Bloc,” January 21, 1954, Resolution 605, Session 20, in *The Arab States and the Arab League*, ed., Muhammad Khalil, Vol. II (Beirut: Arab League, 1962), 149.

to Argentina to discuss nonaligned cooperation. Argentine officials hoped Egypt would become the leader in the Arab World and expressed interest in supporting its fight against British occupation.<sup>373</sup> Egypt also continued to encourage greater relations despite the disputes and uncertainty that plagued diplomacy between the two nations in the first two years of the 1950s. The Egyptian representative in Buenos Aires and an admirer of Perón, promoted the circulation of Eva Perón's new book throughout the Arab World. A local Egyptian official "direct[ed] the acquisition and diffusion in the Middle East of the Arab edition of the book '*La Razon de mi vida*,' by the wife of the Republic's president."<sup>374</sup> Syria, as well, did not turn away but grew closer to Argentina. Trade between the two countries steadily increased during the first half of the 1950s and by 1954 had increased fivefold from the previous year. The unprecedented level of commerce made Syria Argentina's second largest Arab export market.<sup>375</sup>

Some Arab governments went as far as approaching the Perón administration for armaments. In May 1955, the Saudi Arabian defense minister met with the new Argentine envoy in Jeddah to discuss the Kingdom's interest in purchasing military equipment, including tanks and aircraft. The envoy passed the request on to the Eastern Europe and Near East division of the Foreign Ministry in Buenos Aires. In the clearest example of Perón's de-escalation of pro-Arab policies, the head of the division stated unequivocally that no sales of hardware would even be contemplated. Based on the minister's response, Ignacio Klich concludes that the Perón administration believed "[any sale would] likely stir up a hornet's nest in Argentina's much more important relations with Washington and London."<sup>376</sup> Despite Saudi Arabia's lack of success, Syria and Egypt held fast to their faith in relations with Argentina.

<sup>373</sup> DAIA, "Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentina," 15.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>376</sup> Klich, "Equidistance and Gradualism," 224-225.

Argentine-Arab communities also did their part to contribute to positive Arab-Argentine relations. Elías Richa, the well-known spokesman for the Argentine-Arab community, offered an interview for a local newspaper in which he praised Perón for his work with the Arab World and the Arab immigrant communities in Argentina. Richa reminded readers that Perón remained the “first constitutional President of Argentina who established formal relations with the Arab speaking countries, raising [their] prestige and the dignity [in] the world.”<sup>377</sup> Richa added that Perón went beyond words of affirmation and actively protected the Arab cause through international law. Richa concluded the piece by calling Perón “the statesmen of greatest genius in the world.”<sup>378</sup> The comments did not have the desired effect. Despite the support from the Arab World and local Arab communities, Perón’s escalation of anti-U.S. and nonalignment rhetoric did not translate into more substantive relations with the Arab World. Argentina appeared unwilling to involve itself further in an increasingly dangerous Middle East.

### *Changing policies in Arab World*

The delicate relationship with Egypt came crashing down with the ouster of King Farouk in July 1952. The Free Officers Movement, led by Muhammad Naguib and Gamal Abdul Nasser, took the reins of power and instituted nationalist, anti-imperialist reforms. The new leaders abolished the constitutional monarchy and openly challenged British occupation of the Suez Canal. Argentine fears of political upheaval finally came to fruition. Madero’s concerns of a Cold War conflict in Egypt appeared on the horizon. The new regime’s confrontational attitude suggested the coming of a regional war between Cold War alignments, Israeli

<sup>377</sup> Elías Richa quoted in DAIA, “Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentina,” 8.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

sovereignty, and Arab nationalism.<sup>379</sup> Argentina's dependence on U.S. financial aid and its own lack of capabilities prevented the Perón administration from openly supporting one country. Perón offered no rigorous defense of Egypt. The risks were too great.

Another sign that Perón had decided to pull back from an aggressive third position agenda in the Arab World came with improved relations with Jordan. Up to this point, Perón had avoided recognition of the Hashemite Kingdom to maintain relations with other Arab nations and to avoid appearances of collusion with First World allies. If official relations with Israel were not enough to prove Perón's shift in policy, a change in Jordan's status left little doubt. Argentine officials spread in the Arab World sent a letter advocating for a change in status with Jordan. The Argentine official in Tel Aviv championed the potential change, reporting that King Abdullah's secret peace negotiations with Israel might include a separate treaty stipulation for Jordan to break away from the Arab League. Campodónico in Syria and Carlos R. Pineyro in Beirut also supported establishing relations with Jordan. Each believed relations would recognize Jordan's growing international importance and symbolize Argentina's continued friendship with the Arab World. The political department in the Foreign Ministry did not initially share their enthusiasm. The office characterized Jordan as a "permanent source of discord among Arab League members" and refused to change its status with the Hashemite Kingdom.<sup>380</sup> Nevertheless, Argentina reversed its stance and established formal relations with Jordan in 1954. Igancio Klich concludes that "by the time Argentina established diplomatic relations with the Jordanians, the controversial Abdullah, murdered in Jerusalem in July 1951,

<sup>379</sup> Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to the Muslim Brotherhood* (Hartford: Yale University Press, 2013); Said K. Aburish, *Nasser: The Last Arab* (London: Thomas Dunne Books, 2004).

<sup>380</sup> Klich, "Equidistance and Gradualism," 233.

had been succeeded by his [more pliable] son.” A separate Jordanian peace agreement with Israel was no longer a possibility.<sup>381</sup>

### *Trouble for Perón*

By 1953, the worsening financial situation forced Perón to drift back towards the United States in yet another sudden change of direction. Renewed anti-U.S. sentiment had ended as quickly as it had begun. The Argentine president rescinded tough policies that had frustrated foreign investment and eventually allowed for U.S.-based Standard Oil of California to explore the nation’s oil reserves. Argentina also agreed to a nuclear cooperation pact with the United States in 1953, which allowed U.S. companies to conduct aerial surveys over land thought to contain uranium thorium.<sup>382</sup> The rapprochement with the United States angered the powerful nationalist constituency, among others. The fragile, yet cordial relationship Perón administration held with most nationalist groups turned sour after 1952. The “virulently anti-Semitic” groups generally despised capitalism and communism, and expressed a blended allegiance to Catholicism and nationhood.<sup>383</sup> Much like other Argentines, nationalists had become disillusioned with Perón in the face of economic turmoil. Popular nationalist writer Máximo Etchecopar criticized the entire movement of *Perónism* calling it an “ambition [that] consists in convincing, in persuading and adding converts...to its creed” rather than one aimed at truly revolutionizing the economic, social, and political systems.<sup>384</sup> Another famous nationalist thinker Julio Irazusta concluded that Perón’s “economic nationalism was always found in words,

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States*, 95; Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 111.

<sup>383</sup> Richard Walter, “The Right and the Perónists, 1943-1955,” in *The Argentine Right: Its History and Intellectual Origins, 1910 to the Present*, eds. Sandra McGee Deutsch and Ronald H. Dolkart (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1993), 99-118. David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 106-107.

<sup>384</sup> Máximo Etchecopar quoted in Walter, “The Right and the Perónists,” 113.



never in deeds.”<sup>385</sup> The anti-Perón rhetoric was as strong as ever. Although nationalists were previously a small vocal minority, the movement became part of a much larger opposition against the Argentine president. Sensing his own decline, Perón ramped up his campaign of repression designed to silence his opponents and regain his political power. The tide of opposition included the Catholic Church. As part of his campaign to quell dissent, Perón decided to challenge the Church’s influence by introducing laws that contradicted religious teaching. The Congress, now a rubber-stamp for Perón’s agenda, ratified multiple laws, which included the legalization of divorce, the abolishment of religious education, legalization of brothels, and prohibition against religious rallies in public. In defiance of Perón, some religious figures hosted a public assembly on June 11, 1955 to protest the ratifications. The president responded by arresting hundreds and expelling two Catholic bishops from the city. In turn, the Vatican, ex-communicated every Argentine government official involved, including Perón.<sup>386</sup> The Argentine president’s power grab was his last. After a failed coup on June 16<sup>th</sup>, nationalist, pro-Catholic, and anti-Perónist sympathizers came together to oust Perón on September 16, 1955.

### **Post-Perón and the Suez Crisis**

The overthrow of Perón reinvigorated the nationalist movement in Argentina, which gave rise to new instances of anti-Semitism. This resurgence among the Argentine nationalist also coincided with the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The long-standing tensions between nationalists and ethnic communities in Argentina resurfaced just as the interests of both Arab and Israelis took on new meanings in Latin America. And the bridge Perón built from

<sup>385</sup> Julio Irazusta quoted in *ibid*.

<sup>386</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 139-142.

Argentina into the Middle East was now used to transfer the Arab-Israeli conflict into Argentina. Perón had not only left Argentina in economic turmoil, but his foreign policies now exacerbated ethnic tensions within Argentina.

Nationalist sympathizers' usurpation of Perón struck fear in the hearts of Jewish-Argentine communities. These communities witnessed as propaganda linking Perón to so-called "unsavory" Jews spread throughout the country. During a demonstration in Córdoba province - the same place of pro-Arab rallies after the Arab League invasion of Israel - protestors carried signs reading "Down with Perón and his Jewish friends."<sup>387</sup> Many Jewish residents believed they would become targets of violence. Alarmed with the anti-Semitic propaganda, the Israeli embassy used its new position in Argentina to initiate a dialogue with the Church in hopes that together they could prevent aggression against the local Jewish communities. But the dialogue was not enough. The Israeli Foreign Ministry refused to wait on the Argentine government and deployed the head of the Mossad, Isser Harel, to Buenos Aires to assist local Jews in their defense against potential attacks.<sup>388</sup>

The Israeli government's independent action symbolized the increasing influence of Middle East actors in Argentina. Israel's unilateral, in-country response to the resurgence of anti-Semitic nationalists suggested that Israel officials felt comfortable enough to insert themselves into a local conflict. Perón's unprecedented policies in the Middle East partly explained this interaction. The tangled web of domestic discord immediately following Perón's fall would facilitate the rise of Arab and Jewish foreign influence in Argentina. Despite a concerted effort to distance Argentina from increasingly volatile conflict in Palestine, the deposed president had unknowingly introduced those hostilities into an Argentine society.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid, 143.

### *Aramburu and Suez Crisis*

The fall of Perón unleashed an effort to undo his political reforms and rid Argentina of his influence. The movement proved so intense that the first leader following Perón's ouster, the nationalist Eduardo Lonardi, survived only two months before the Argentine armed forces removed him from office for being too moderate. Lonardi embraced a conciliatory tone and failed to move against *Perónistas* within his circle at a speed that satisfied military leaders. In his place, leaders in the armed forces appointed the staunch, anti-Perónist General Pedro Aramburu as the new president. The General wasted no time in changing the political landscape.<sup>389</sup>

Aramburu immediately reorganized the government structure through the creation of a military junta and systemically dissolved all vestiges of Perónism. The president arrested supporters, disbanded Perónista organizations, and reinstated media outlets, like *La Prensa*, previously banned under the Perón administration. Aramburu went to such lengths to rid the nation of any remnant of the former president that he outlawed the use and dissemination of publications advocating for Perón's third position policy. As a result of these policies, David Sheinin highlights, Argentina's support for the developing world became the first international casualty in the war against Perón. "After 1955," he writes, "Argentina was generally unwilling to alter its 'Western' policy position in favor of developing nations."<sup>390</sup> In place of the third position, Argentina embarked on a milder foreign policy agenda, which, by no accident, reversed many of Perón's nonalignment strategies. Argentina joined the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and also ratified the Bogotá Charter to the delight of U.S. officials. Eisenhower himself was pleased to see new leadership. In a speech at a political rally in Seattle

<sup>389</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 302-303; Robert Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1945-1962: Perón to Frondizi* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1980).

<sup>390</sup> Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States*, 96.

in October 1956, Eisenhower scolded the Truman administration for “loaning vast sums of money” to Argentina, while labeling Perón an “exiled Latin American dictator” who used the funds to build up his “personal fortune.”<sup>391</sup> Eisenhower’s Secretary of State John Foster Dulles went further, stating that Truman policies contributed greatly to keeping Perón in power.<sup>392</sup>

With Perón deposed, however, Eisenhower believed the U.S. and Argentina now shared a mutual interest in “democracy and freedom,” to which Aramburu agreed.<sup>393</sup> Aramburu hoped that more palatable image of Argentina would attract foreign investment which could initiate economic recovery.

Yet, by March 1957, Argentina owned a trade deficit near \$250 million, with dangerously low silver and gold reserves and a budget that exceeded its revenue by \$14,000,000.<sup>394</sup>

Aramburu’s trade agreements, free-market policies, and renewed emphasis on U.S. investment had done little to change the economic troubles, and neither had expunging Perón’s memory from the political and social landscape. Later reports characterized Aramburu as “unable to bring prosperity to the country and for that reason...[he did] not break Perón’s hold on segments of the Argentine voters.”<sup>395</sup> The Suez Crisis of 1956 reminded Aramburu of other consequences of Perón’s policies. The crisis and Perón’s unparalleled outreach to the Arab World forced the Argentine government to concern itself with Middle East conflict and anticipate the local reaction.

<sup>391</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Address at a Rally in the Civic Auditorium, Seattle, Washington, October 17, 1956,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower January 1 – December 31, 1956* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1958), 944.

<sup>392</sup> Joseph Hearst, “Dulles Traces Perón’s Rise to Aid by Truman,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 2, 1956.

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid*; Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Letter Greeting President Aramburu on the Occasion of Argentina’s Aviation Week, November 12, 1957,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Dwight D. Eisenhower January 1 – December 31, 1957* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1958), 805-806.

<sup>394</sup> Edward Morrow, “Argentina Warned by Aramburu She is Facing Economic Disaster,” *New York Times*, March 21, 1957.

<sup>395</sup> “The World,” *New York Times*, March 2, 1958.

In the years surrounding Perón's fall, the nonalignment attitudes among developing nations had graduated into a more coordinated resistance. The same year that saw Perón's demise and that of his third position endeavors also witnessed the gathering of Third World forces at the Bandung Conference and a resurgence of Arab nationalism. While Perón's agenda had ended, global nonalignment began to coalesce. The sentiments shared among many developing nations found inspiration in a Cold War that appeared to be imperialism renewed. The British control over the Suez Canal represented, in the minds of the Egyptian leadership, the remnants of colonialism. President Nasser of Egypt aimed to lead a pan-Arab movement to rid the region of foreign occupation once and for all. Then, after years of heated rhetoric between the British and Egyptian governments over Suez, the conflict that Argentine representatives feared finally materialized.<sup>396</sup>

In October 1954, Egypt and Great Britain signed an agreement that transferred authority of the Suez Canal over to the Arab nation. The British agreed to withdraw all military forces from the Canal Zone by June 1956 with the condition that they have access to the base in the event of a foreign aggression. Yet as David Nicholas writes, one fundamental fact remained: "The British and French still controlled the lion's share of the stock of the Suez Canal Company, and therefore, its overall operations."<sup>397</sup> Nasser only nominally controlled the canal that ran through his nation's territory. Moreover, the Egyptian president became convinced that the British had designed the 1955 Baghdad Pact that brought Iraq (Nasser's rival) into British alignment to isolate his government. American foreign policies also contributed to Nasser's

<sup>396</sup> For a more detailed explanation on the historical context leading to the Suez Crisis, see J.C. Hurewitz, "The Historical Context," Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "Nasser and the Struggle for Independence," Wm. Roger Louis, "The Tragedy of the Anglo-Egyptian Settlement of 1954," and Shimon Shamir, "The Collapse of Project Alpha," in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences*, eds. Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 19-102; James Jankowski, *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).

<sup>397</sup> Nicholas, *Eisenhower 1956*, 13.

anxieties. The U.S. government refused to send arms to Israel but backed the British-led Baghdad Pact. Meanwhile, U.S. officials tried to secure a type of cooperation with Egypt that would keep Soviet influence out without threatening American relations with Britain. That would be difficult with Nasser's regular, anti-English campaign designed to "spoil the British plans in the Middle East."<sup>398</sup> By April 1956, hazy U.S. policy and Nasser's rhetoric stalled negotiations over Western funding for the all-important Aswan Dam venture, a project intended to tame the unpredictable Nile River. Sensing trouble, Nasser immediately played to Cold War fears and ramped up anti-colonial rhetoric. "Premiere Gamal Abdul Nasser has declared that he still holds in his pocket a Soviet offer to help finance the construction of the proposed High Dam of Aswan," the *New Times* reported in an April 1 article.<sup>399</sup> This was no bluff, Nasser explained. He then tapped into the global, anti-colonial sentiments by explaining why he believed the Soviets were winning the Cold War. They have "adopted slogans" against imperialism, he lectured, arguing that the U.S. was "the greatest country in the world, but...can do great harm...if [it] continue[s] to support colonialism against the philosophy of [its] own revolution."<sup>400</sup> Nasser's claim that the U.S. backed colonialism was a clear dig at American support for Israel and Britain. An uptick in skirmishes between Israel and Egypt along their shared borders in the first half of 1956 further complicated discussions and irritated the Eisenhower administration.<sup>401</sup> Frustrated and isolated, Nasser announced the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company on July 26, 1956.

<sup>398</sup> Osgood Caruthers, "Nasser Retaining Soviet Dam Offer Lest West Demur," *New York Times*, April 1, 1956.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> Gamal Abdul Nasser quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>401</sup> Nichols, *Eisenhower 1956*, 49-52.

The news rocked Europe. Almost all the oil supply for Western Europe was either shipped through the canal or traveled by way of nearby pipelines.<sup>402</sup> The French and British feared for their economic survival. Israel, for its part, did not trust Nasser to manage the canal fairly, fearing that he would discriminate against deliveries to and from the Jewish state. Therefore, on October 29, 1956, Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula, followed days later by a joint British-French military campaign in what historians later learned to be a preplanned attack by the three. The Eisenhower administration looked upon the invasion disapprovingly, and the U.N. immediately began work on constructing a cease-fire.

### *Argentina reacts*

The Aramburu administration reacted harshly to the news of invasion. The administration openly derided Israel for its action.<sup>403</sup> The administration also went to great lengths to show Argentina's displeasure. In one instance, the government forced an Argentine passenger ship to bypass its scheduled arrival in Haifa and return to Marseille after Argentine officials learned that the ship was carrying 842 European Jewish volunteers for the Israeli army.<sup>404</sup> Argentina also expressed its frustration with Israel at the United Nations.

The Aramburu administration initially co-sponsored a resolution that called for the deployment of peacekeeping troops to maintain stability during a withdrawal of foreign troops. Then a more sternly worded resolution followed from other U.N. members, demanding that Israel retreat to the Israeli-Egyptian armistice line and calling on the immediate withdraw of

<sup>402</sup> Ibid, 152.

<sup>403</sup> Rein, *Israel, Argentina, and the Jews*, 152; For additional works that briefly examine the reaction of other groups in Argentina to the Suez Crisis, see Mercedes Saborido, "El Partido Comunista Argentino y la Guerra de los Seis Días," available from [www.izquierdas.cl](http://www.izquierdas.cl); Internet; accessed December 29, 2014.

<sup>404</sup> "Volunteers Are Halted on Way to Israel," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 3, 1956.

French and British forces.<sup>405</sup> Argentina voted in favor of the tougher resolution.<sup>406</sup> After years of abstention in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Aramburu had made a clear statement to Israel that Argentina would continue to promote national autonomy against outside interference. Argentina remained an advocate for the developing world.

Ironically, the votes also spoke to the improving relations between Argentina and the United States. Both countries not only voted for the resolutions regarding the Suez Crisis, but Argentina also voted with the U.S. in its quest to win South Korea's membership into the U.N. Following the U.S. lead, Argentina then agreed to excluded North Korea from the request; a complete reversal of Perón's policy. The Aramburu administration also voted in favor of a U.S. resolution "not to consider Chinese representation at the 11<sup>th</sup> General Assembly" and joined the United States in voting for a resolution that called for the Algerian people to pursue democracy after decades of French rule.<sup>407</sup> American officials later repaid Argentina's loyalty by recommending it as Cuba's successor to the Security Council at the end of 1957 over Panama and the Dominican Republic.<sup>408</sup> The voting patterns confirmed Aramburu aimed to balance support for the third world and a friendship with the United States. More importantly, Argentina had gone from antagonist to nominal ally of the United States.

Interestingly, the votes also indicated that Aramburu maintained some semblance of Perón's policies towards the Arab World. The Argentine delegation offered support to the Arab World by endorsing rather hard-nosed language calling for Israel's return to the armistice lines

<sup>405</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Editorial Note," July 26-December 31, 1956, *FRUS, Suez Crisis, 1955-1957*, 1053-1054.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid*; United Nations Official Website, "Resolution 1001 (ES-1) and Resolution 1002 (ES-1)," available at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dhl/>; internet; accessed December 27, 2014.

<sup>407</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Instruction from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions," August 3, 1957, *FRUS, United Nations and General International Matters, 1955-1957*, 209, 488; William Fulton "Algeria Issue Stalemated in U.N., 37 to 37," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 7, 1957.

<sup>408</sup> "Instruction from the Department of State to Certain Diplomatic Missions," *FRUS, 1955-1957*, 211.



and an immediate withdrawal of troops. It remains unclear whether Argentina stood with the Arab World as an ally or simply out of sympathy for Egypt's national sovereignty. The Suez Crisis did reveal, however, just how influential Middle East issues had become in Argentina.

### *The Impact of the Suez Crisis on Argentina*

The conflict cost approximately 30 million dollars in damages and took roughly six months of repair before the canal reopened for business in April 1957.<sup>409</sup> The shutdown caused serious harm to Argentina's already beleaguered economy. The Argentine Economic Minister, Dr. Roberto Verrier, attributed his country's economic plight specifically to a recent drought that had cost \$60,000,000 in exchange earnings and to the Suez Crisis. He noted that the closure of the canal raised crude oil prices, which cost Argentina nearly \$100,000,000.<sup>410</sup> The Aramburu administration had little choice but to consider emergency, austerity measures. Argentina found itself, yet again, on the precipice of economic disaster. The financial issues were further compounded by the domestic consequences related to the crisis.

Just as the Israeli government intervened in Argentine affairs in the weeks after Perón was disposed, the Suez Crisis invoked a similar reaction. By 1956, Arab and Israeli forces had successfully built inroads into Argentine society. Government and nongovernment organizations tapped into the ethnic solidarity among Jewish and Arab communities to promote their respective positions in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moreover, the nationalist movement had fostered an anti-Semitic environment. Reactions to the Suez Crisis, therefore, exposed the connections between ethnic strife in Argentina and the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

<sup>409</sup> "Foes Attack British Squad in Port Said," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 11, 1956.

<sup>410</sup> Morrow, "Argentina Warned by Aramburu She is Facing Economic Disaster," *New York Times*, March 21, 1957.

After the invasion, the Israeli government immediately began a public relations tour to justify its actions in the Suez Crisis. In March 1956, Israeli officials Moshe Sharett and Moshe Tov spoke at the Pro-Israel Latin American Congress, held in neighboring Uruguay, in an address to the Jewish communities in South America. In widely reported speeches, both leaders tied Israel's existence to the survival of the Jewish diaspora and called on Jews everywhere to lend Israel moral and material support in its fight to maintain independence. The Argentine-Jewish community responded by initiating a fundraising operation to purchase arms for the Zionist state.<sup>411</sup> The Pro-Israel Congress then moved its campaign to Buenos Aires in November members organized a conference with a theme of "Peace in the Middle East." Although Buenos Aires was still under a dark cloud of anti-Semitism, the conference boasted well-known intellectuals, politicians, and other major Argentine figures.<sup>412</sup> Arab officials and other supporters of Arab-Palestinians also held their own campaigns.

The Arab World wasted no time in organizing a counterweight to Israeli activity in Argentina. Argentina did not officially recognize the Arab League as it had Arab countries prior to the 1956 Suez Crisis. Therefore, the League established its presence through positions in other Arab governments' offices. Scholar Victor A. Mirelman explains, for example, the first Arab League representative in Argentina, Issa Nakhle, "started his activity...as press attaché of the Egyptian Embassy."<sup>413</sup> During this period, Nakhle founded and was the chief editor for *América and Oriente*, what Mirelman characterizes as a "very efficient arm of Arab propaganda" which attained "wide distribution in some leading Perónist circles and among anti-Semitic

<sup>411</sup> Rein, *Israel, Argentina, and the Jews*, 151.

<sup>412</sup> Congreso Latinoamericano pro Israel, "Por la Paz en el Medio Oriente," (Buenos Aires: Congreso Latinoamericano pro Israel, 1956).

<sup>413</sup> Mirelman, "Attitude Towards Jews in Argentina," 213.

nationalist groups.”<sup>414</sup> According to press reports from the summer of 1956, Arab diplomats and prominent Arab-Argentines organized events as a show of support to Egypt. Within a very short time, Arab-Argentine groups began to circulate material promoting Nasser’s nationalization project. Some of these same groups added that their work was not against the Jewish people but Zionism and the illegal and artificial state of Israel.<sup>415</sup> By October 1956, however, the pro-Egypt sentiments turned anti-Jewish.

The Arab League and Arab embassies, primarily Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon, joined forces in an effort to counter Israel’s own ongoing campaign by linking the anti-Semitic sentiments in Argentina with the discontent towards Israel’s action. Publications surfaced in Mendoza province vilifying Israel and in one case referring to David Ben-Gurion, Israeli Prime Minister, as the Jewish Hitler.<sup>416</sup> Arab diplomats made no secret of their disdain for Israel during this period and, with Nakhle’s anti-Israel periodical, contributed to the anti-Semitic atmosphere in Argentina. Some street protests in Buenos Aires devolved into vandalism of several Jewish community centers. The escalation violence alarmed Israeli officials. A troubled Israeli Ambassador finally made an official presentation to the Argentine Foreign Affairs Ministry concerning the content of Arab League propaganda. According to the Delegation of Argentine-Jewish Associations (DAIA), the Ambassador called Mr. Issa Nakhle’s work, which included incredible rumors of a Jewish plot to remove Christianity from the holy places of Palestine, “vicious slander” and “poisonous agitation” and an attempt to undo “the friendly relations between Argentina and Israel.”<sup>417</sup> The complaints did not appear to stop the increased threats to Argentine-Jews and their property. In fact, within four years the ethnic strife would

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> DAIA, “Anti-Jewish Activities of the Arabs in Argentina,” 20.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid, 20 -30.

<sup>417</sup> Aryeh Leon Kubovy quoted in *ibid*, 16.

reach unprecedented levels. But, for the moment, Arab officials had successfully used the Suez Crisis to blend Israel's poor international standing with revived anti-Semitism in Argentina. Broader still, the power of both Israeli and Arab interests suggested the internationalization of Arab-Israeli conflict had officially found a home in Argentina.

## **Conclusion**

President Juan Perón entered the 1950s faced with economic uncertainty, which fueled domestic anxieties and undermined his third position agenda. The social and economic decline in Argentina also crippled Perón's power and weakened the country's international program. The intransigent Argentina president had little choice but to seek aid from Argentina's self-described rival, in the United States. In the Cold War context, both parties interpreted financial aid to mean a change in political alignment. Each government held differing views about the nature of that alignment, though. Indeed, new expectations had redefined the relationship but both countries held different expectations. Perón hoped quiet reassurances to the U.S. officials would excuse for public denounces against the United States. Perón, however, proved unable to balance his popular nonalignment rhetoric with his undeniable dependence on foreign assistance. Labor sectors, nationalists, and the military elite all expressed anger with the state of the nation, but for vastly different reasons. To satisfy all parties and retain power, Perón created ad hoc policies that changed depending on which group was applying the most pressure at the moment. The fickleness of the Perón administration only fueled the rising tide of discontent. As his power eroded, the Argentine president embraced a new level of authoritarianism leading to further public outrage.

The domestic instability led directly to erratic foreign policies. The third position agenda that had inspired a deep connection with some in the Arab World fizzled, even though Arab nations, like Syria and Egypt, continued to court Argentina. Nevertheless, Perón had very little to offer his Middle East counterparts. He tried to reassure Arab partners with a renewed, nonaligned rhetoric and pro-Arab pronouncements, but the show of support had little substance. Observers recognized that Argentina's more meaningful moves towards Israel and dependence on the United States meant a complete shift in strategy.

Less emphasis on a third position agenda left a vacuum in relations with the developing world. Arabs and Israelis felt compelled to ramp up their efforts in Argentina in the absence of a robust diplomacy. Moreover, the Argentine public began to take a greater interest in Middle East affairs. And the divide between the supporters of Israel and those of the Arab World widened with the Suez Crisis. Argentina emerged as a frontline in the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Perón's unprecedented foreign policies had introduced the conflict to Argentina, extending its influence deeper into society as his power declined. Aramburu's busy attempts at balancing support for the developing world and dependence on the United States gave the conflict more room to grow. Tensions simmered just below the surface towards the end of the 1950s.

## Chapter Five

### Defining Times: the Eichmann Affair, Six-Day War, and the Return of Perón

Argentina's return to civilian rule in May 1958 failed to repair the economic and social turmoil that continued to undermine its quest for stability. Economic reforms disenfranchised workers unions dominated by Peronists, while emboldening anti-Peronists as they tightened their grip on power. Most importantly, polarizing nationalist forces finally regained a foothold in Argentine society after decades of suppression. These dogged believers in Argentine autonomy and virulent anti-Semitism found their way into positions of power within the military and increased their cooperation with the growing Arab lobby in Argentina. As the Arab-Israeli conflict took on international importance, Arab and Israeli forces ramped up their propaganda efforts in Argentina. The conflict morphed into ideological battle, much like the Cold War. Paul Thomas Chamberlain writes that the Palestine conflict "infiltrated... interstate terrain" and seized "transnational space" in an unprecedented fashion. In short, he argues, Palestine became a "physical and conceptual space" that disrupted the global order.<sup>418</sup> The themes connected to the Arab-Israeli conflict spread like a virus, finding hosts among immigrant communities, foreign officials, and local Argentine organizations. By 1958, the conflict had become embedded in Argentine society.

The concept of Palestine, as Chamberlain defines it, became the center of any meaningful dialogue between Argentina and the Arab World. Yet, expanding relations proved difficult since government stability and continuity remained elusive throughout the Arab World after 1957. Although the Suez Crisis had emboldened Israel's Arab adversaries and temporarily inspired cooperation among rival Arab states, the moment proved fleeting. Syria and Egypt joined forces

<sup>418</sup> Chamberlain, *The Global Offensive*, 3.

to create the United Arab Republic in 1958 only to dissolve four years later following a coup in Damascus by opponents of the unification. Worse still, Egypt's military support for anti-government rebels in Yemen turned into a political quagmire once Yemeni government forces regained control. Nasser called the defeat "my Vietnam."<sup>419</sup> In turn, Saudi Arabia and Jordan elevated their military readiness fearing Egypt's new penchant for intervention. The uneasy environment increased the likelihood of a regional conflict.<sup>420</sup> In Lebanon, the religious and ethnic tensions within its diverse population boiled over into civil war in 1975, while the rise of the Ba'ath Party inspired coups in Iraq and Syria in 1963.<sup>421</sup> Instability reigned in the Middle East.

The influence of Cold War added to the political uncertainty spreading throughout the Middle East. First World political alignments and economic expansion brought with them increased Cold War competition. By 1960, the United States had virtually supplanted Europe as the leading Western influence in the Middle East after the Ba'ath Party takeover in Iraq had weakened British authority and Algerians rebels prepared the expulsion of their French occupiers. This new position as a First World leader, the looming Soviet presence, and strategic oil interests together convinced the U.S. government to move beyond its non-interventionist strategies, like those during the Suez Crisis, and into a more active role in regional affairs.<sup>422</sup> Subsequent policies resulted in interventions in Lebanon and Jordan in 1958. Meanwhile, weapons shipments from the U.S. to allies in the region, once disallowed by the Tripartite Declaration of 1950, sparked a competitive weapons trade between the Soviets and Americans. The situation quickly evolved into a proxy battle of the Cold War. The climate after 1957

<sup>419</sup> Gamal Abdul Nasser quoted in Warren Bass, *Support Any Friend: Kennedy's Middle East and the Making of the U.S.-Israeli Alliance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 141.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid*, 256.

<sup>421</sup> Gendzier, *Notes from a Minefield*, 230-263.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid*, 322-337.

reflected the bitter Cold War divide. This environment, coupled with the eventual emergence of internationally-savvy Palestinian insurgents, gave the Arab-Israeli conflict its global dimensions. The presence of outside forces during the Arab-Israeli Wars of the 1960s underscored this internationalization.<sup>423</sup> Argentina felt the brunt of the Palestine dispute as a conceptual space. And while Juan Perón deserves much credit for building a permanent bridge between Middle East politics and Argentina, other administrations contributed to the story.

Argentine leaders who followed Perón each addressed the fallout from the populist leader's domestic policies and his third position doctrine differently. Some played more significant roles than others. Aramburu's successor, Arturo Frondizi, took a moderate approach in domestic policy after taking power in May 1958 by trying to implement economic reforms that satisfied both political leftists and powerful military officials. He failed and was forced out. Centralist President Arturo Umberto Illía reemphasized Argentina's international autonomy, but military leaders eventually removed him in June 1966 after only three years in office for his domestic policies favoring the politically excluded Peronists. An era of increased anti-Peronist activity ensued, led by Juan Carlos Onganía. Onganía tried to repair Argentina by growing closer to the United States and outlawing expressions of Peronism. His heavy-handed authoritarianism, however, provided the momentum Perón needed for his return to power in 1973. The ten administrations between 1955 and 1973 were stories of economic contradictions, hollow antagonism, and redirected global aspirations. Scholar Aldo C. Vacs characterizes the period as a "mix of nationalism and internationalism, assertiveness and subordination, hegemonic aspirations and pragmatism, and neutralism and alignment," which shifted between

<sup>423</sup> Bass, *Support Any Friend*, 10-20; Ovendale, *The Origins of the Arab-Israel Wars*, 167-184 ; Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 280-345.



challenging the “international distribution of power” and attempts to “insert the country into the existing world order.”<sup>424</sup>

This struggle over a national identity and an international purpose in the intra-Perón era left Argentina vulnerable to internal disruption and external exploitation. Nationalists’ anti-Semitism fueled the ethnic tensions between Jewish and Arab immigrant communities, already heightened with the influx of outside influence connected to the Arab League and the Israeli government. Meanwhile, the constant changeover in Argentine leadership undermined its international credibility as successive administrations struggled to balance a proclivity for Third World principles with their dependence on the First World relationships. The inconsistencies saw Argentina endorse the anti-imperialist agendas of the nonaligned movement and support the Palestine Liberation Organization’s (PLO) entrance into the United Nations, while trying to stamp out domestic insurgents who themselves were supported by the same PLO. The net effect of these circumstances was to deepen the conflict between those associated with or sympathetic to either Arab or Israeli interests. In short, Argentina became the new frontier and the Latin American front in the internationalized Arab-Israeli war.

Three separate events between 1958-1975 offer the best representation of how politics, society, and the Cold War came together to make Argentina the Latin American front in the Arab-Israeli conflict. First, the Israeli government’s kidnapping of Adolf Eichmann in Buenos Aires in 1960 came about as a consequence of Perón’s separate, seemingly unrelated strategies of harboring Nazis and recognizing Israel. The operation coincided with a rising tide of anti-Semitism. With greater freedom to operate, nationalist groups spread their anti-Israel message and joined Arabs in their support of the Arab-Palestinian cause. This cooperation dovetailed with the rise of Third Worldism and the internationalization of the Palestine dilemma. As Cold

<sup>424</sup> Vacs, “Argentina: Between Confrontation and Alignment,” 288-308.

War superpowers tried to manage the coming confrontation with the Third World movement, the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the minds of many in the developing world, became a struggle of occupied Palestinians against imperialist forces. In Argentina, Arab officials employed this imperialist-Zionist rhetoric and helped spark a new round of debates on the supposed Jewish threat to Latin America. In short, the Eichmann capture would expose just how deeply embedded the Arab-Israeli conflict had become in Argentina.

The 1967 Arab-Israeli War represented a second incident that highlighted how Middle East issues affected Argentine society. The Six-Day war proved to be a critical turning point in First World alignment and Third World cooperation as the Palestine dilemma became a new front in the international Cold War. The 1967 conflict singlehandedly turned superpowers' affinities into ardent support. The U.S., for the first time since Israel's creation, offered overt assistance to the Jewish state during the war and in the subsequent peace negotiations at the United Nations. Likewise, the Soviet Union extended its support to Arab nations, like Egypt and Syria, through weapons transfers, deployment of military advisers, and political backing. The 1967 conflict deepened Cold War divisions and projected its ideological polarization onto the international community. The emergence of the Third World movement and its belief that Israel was now a puppet of U.S. imperialism added to this post-war atmosphere. Argentina could no longer maintain a middle ground. Balancing a growing dependence on the U.S. and the need to remain viable in the eyes of the developing world was no longer sustainable. Here, Perón chose to pull the country towards the Third World after he returned to power in 1973.

The third and final element involved Perón's second presidential term. The administrations between 1955 and 1972 had waffled between support for Israel, affinity for the Arab World, oppression of local Peronistas, and dependence on U.S. economic support. The

attempt to balance all these competing issues left Argentina in political disarray. Arab and Israeli forces used the opportunity to solidify their positions in the country. The conflict between Arab, anti-Semitic, and Jewish forces waged on seemingly outside the scope of government until Perón retook power and promptly rebuilt relations with the Arab World. During his short time in office, Perón declared support for the Palestinians, aligned with the Third World movement, renegotiated oil contracts with leftist Arab governments, and tolerated an increased anti-Semitic rhetoric in public circles. His policies, if just briefly, nursed the Arab-Israeli conflict in Argentina to maturity.

The years before Perón returned to power, however, proved equally important in the story of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Argentina. Aramburu left office in April 1958, having successfully weakened Perónist power in Argentina. Yet, the economic, political, and ethnic turmoil remained. His successor, Arturo Frondizi (1958-1962) now managed the economic trouble passed on from Perón's time in office. Frondizi would also have to manage a remarkable escalation in ethnic tensions after the Eichmann capture.

## **Frondizi**

Aramburu had largely reversed the tenants of Perón's foreign policy by aligning closer with the United States on political and economic matters. The positive state of relations between the U.S. government and the Aramburu administration, however, did not erase the lingering uncertainties in Argentine politics. In fact, U.S. Ambassador to Argentina considered Arturo Frondizi, who ultimately succeeded Aramburu after winning the May 1958 presidential election, to be the second coming of Perón. Frondizi responded to U.S. concerns by toning down his nationalist rhetoric and assuring the American officials of his desire to settle the conflict and

mutual distrust between the two governments. “Legal order [has been] restored,” Frondizi asserted in a letter to Eisenhower after his election victory. He added that the Argentine government was “happy to support any initiative to reexamine and revise those economic policies, systems, or factors,” which had hindered unity of the American countries.<sup>425</sup> To prove his intent, Frondizi paid a personal visit to the United States in January 1959, becoming the first Argentine president to do so.

Although initially supported by Peronists, Frondizi quickly reversed the nationalist policies of the group’s famed leader. American oil companies inked new contracts, while the Argentine government approved Frondizi’s incentives for foreign investment. The U.S. government and American lenders responded by cobbling together some \$468 million in financial assistance. The reentrance of foreign business angered the president’s former Peronist supporters in the petroleum unions, and proved too sudden for the military which, as social unrest spread, quietly contemplated removing Frondizi from power.<sup>426</sup> Even still, the Argentine president moved ahead with economic stabilization plans and foreign business development. His policies also aroused the anger of nationalists groups. These elements found renewed growth in post-Perón Argentina and now held tremendous sway within the military. In order to maintain power and for continued implementation of his economic plans, Frondizi had to prove his loyalty to military leaders by quelling the social unrest. The most prominent nationalists demanded removing once and for all the Peronist and Communist elements from Argentina.<sup>427</sup> Cleaning Argentina of these forces, however, could not erase the consequences of Perón’s foreign policies.

<sup>425</sup> Alberto Frondizi quoted in Dwight Eisenhower, “Exchange of Letters Between the President and President Frondizi of Argentina,” July 12, 1958, *Public Papers of the Presidents*, 537.

<sup>426</sup> Sheinin, *An Alliance Contained*, 113-115; Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 122-124; Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina*, 272-331.

<sup>427</sup> Peterson, *Argentina and the United States*, 515-518.

The capture of Adolf Eichmann demonstrated the connection between those foreign policies and societal turmoil.

### **Eichmann Capture**

The May 1960, Israeli-led operation that netted Nazi fugitive Adolf Eichmann remains one of the most fascinating plots of the Cold War era. Israeli intelligence services received information in 1957 that Eichmann was living in Buenos Aires under an assumed name and working as a laborer in a local autoplant. After advanced teams confirmed the war criminal's identity and location, a select group of Israeli operators captured Eichmann as he returned home from work on the evening of May 11, 1960. Agents held Eichmann in one of their seven safe houses scattered throughout Buenos Aires for nine days while they awaited the arrival of the Israeli civilian airline, El Al, bringing an Israeli delegation to Argentina for the country's one hundred and fiftieth anniversary celebration. The team and Eichmann boarded the plane under the guise of government employees and traveled safely back to Israel. There, one of the most sought-after Nazi fugitives was sentenced to death by an Israeli civilian court and hung on May 31, 1962.<sup>428</sup>

Historians have addressed, at length, the international fallout from the brazen operation and the resulting diplomatic tryst between Argentina and Israel.<sup>429</sup> Yet, the consequences of Eichmann's capture involved much more. The event represents the confluence of multiple, yet divergent themes in Argentine history and the first instances of Arab-Israeli tension. Whereas

<sup>428</sup> Isser Harel, *The House on Garibaldi Street* (New York: Bantam Books, 1975); Ian Black and Benny Morris, *Israel's Secret Wars: A History of Israel's Intelligence Services* (New York: Grove Press, 1991), 188-191.

<sup>429</sup> For information on the fallout from the operation, see Harel, *The House on Garibaldi Street*; Zvi Aharoni and Wilhelm Dietl, *Operation Eichmann: The Truth about the Pursuit, Capture, and Trial* (New York: Wiley Press, 1997); Hanna Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006).

the Suez Crisis hinted at the underlying conflict in Argentina between Zionist and Arab interests, Eichmann's capture fully exposed it.

The Eichmann capture came about, in part, as a consequence of Juan Perón's decisions to harbor Nazi fugitives and to build relations in the Middle East. Perón invited international attention by offering sanctuary to fleeing Nazis. The Argentine president even expressed opposition to the Nuremberg trials, calling them a "disgrace" to military prestige.<sup>430</sup> More importantly, these well-trained Germans had the potential to aid Perón's modernization efforts. "What better bargain could the Argentine Republic have made," he proclaimed in a 1976 interview, "than to bring these scientists and technicians here? All we paid for was their plane tickets, whereas Germany had invested millions of marks in their training."<sup>431</sup> Perón had forever linked Argentina with arguably the most heinous events of the modern era.

Unrelated at the time, Perón also initiated an unprecedented dialogue with Middle East countries. Argentina quickly achieved clout in the region as the first Latin American country to open an embassy in Tel Aviv and the first to establish relations with several Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia. Arab states, and later Israel, reciprocated with enthusiastic political and cultural exchanges in hopes of earning support for their respective position in the Palestine conflict. In short, Perón's foreign policy unwittingly initiated the spread of Israeli and Arab interests in Argentina.

Israel's growing connection with the local Jewish community and its good standing with Argentina also aided the operation. Israel had recently signed an extradition treaty with Argentina, and although it would not have applied to Eichmann, it symbolized the positive diplomacy between the two nations. Moreover, in preparation for the Argentina's one hundred

<sup>430</sup> Juan Perón quoted in Torcuato Luca de Tena, et al, *Yo, Juan Domingo Perón*, 100.

<sup>431</sup> Juan Perón quoted in *Ibid*, 86.

and fiftieth anniversary celebration, the Jerusalem municipality council named a street after the leader of Argentine independence, General José de San Martín.<sup>432</sup> This state of affairs allowed for an Israeli delegation to visit Argentina without arousing suspicion. Indeed, El Al had never flown to South America, had no flight maps for a trip, and had no resident representative in Buenos Aires. In short, the positive relations gave the Israeli government the proper cover to execute a flawless operation.<sup>433</sup>

Argentina also had a well-known reputation for denying extradition requests of war criminals, having already refused similar inquires from Yugoslavia, West Germany, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. Israeli Ambassador Arye Levavi stated that the Israeli government knew “legal channels would not work.”<sup>434</sup> The legal uncertainties convinced the Israeli government to forgo the process of extradition. And although those with foreknowledge of the operation lamented having to violate the sovereignty of a friendly country, most in the Israeli government believed their ultimate obligation was to their citizens and to the victims of the Holocaust.<sup>435</sup> However, the confluence of different themes did not end there.

The arrival of Arab and Jewish immigrants decades earlier further diversified Argentina’s already multi-ethnic population. Within a short period, Argentina possessed the largest Jewish and Arab populations in Latin America. Often victims of discrimination early on, both Arab and Jews were still able to thrive within their constructed communities and contribute to Argentine society. As the European mandates replaced the Ottoman Empire, both groups joined in

<sup>432</sup> Raanan Rein explains that the extradition treaty did not cover Eichmann’s crimes “because the offenses had not been committed on the territory of one of the two signatory states or by a citizen of one of them.” The Argentine Congress had also yet to ratify the treaty making it unofficial at the time of the operation. See Rein’s *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 162-165.

<sup>433</sup> Neal Bascomb, *Hunting Eichmann: How a Band of Survivors and a Young Spy Agency Chased Down the World’s Most Notorious Nazi* (New York: Mariner Books, 2009), 171.

<sup>434</sup> Arye Levavi quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>435</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 187-190.

solidarity to support their ethnic brethren living under imperial occupation. The Palestine dilemma, however, quickly dissolved local cooperation. Arab and Zionist campaigning in Argentina in and around the partition vote in November 1947 further divided these communities.<sup>436</sup> The lobbying intensified as Arab and Israeli legations began operating in Argentina with the onset of war. Israel's reliance on Jewish communities proved most effective. Indeed, the Jewish state knew it could secure a certain level of support from the Jewish-Argentine community. In fact, recent research suggests that local Jewish citizens aided the Israeli government in the initial surveillance and reconnaissance of Eichmann.<sup>437</sup> This cooperation proved critical for the operation.

Improved relations between Argentina's Jewish community and the state of Israel also coincided with the reemergence of the *Tacuara*, an extreme wing of the nationalist movement. The organization, known for strident anti-Semitism and fierce loyalty to country and Catholicism, resurfaced after the fall of Perón, intent on reversing the ban on religious teaching in schools, a restriction imposed by Perón and upheld after he stepped down.<sup>438</sup> The *Movimento Nacionalista Tacuara* (MNT) established formal ties with neo-Nazi organizations and quickly earned a reputation for violence against leftists and Jews. The MNT held enough political influence that its attacks against Jewish citizens and institutions went largely unpunished.<sup>439</sup> The group's unsavory reputation and dubious connections quickly obscured the organization's original intent of undoing Perón's anti-Catholic religious policies. Scholar David Rock writes

<sup>436</sup> Velcamp "The Historiography of Arab Immigration to Argentina: The Intersection of the Imaginary and the Real Country," 227-248; Humphrey "Ethnic History, Nationalism and Transnationalism," 167-188; Klich, "Arab and Jewish Co-existence in the First Half of 1900s," 1-37.

<sup>437</sup> Bascomb, *Hunting Eichmann*, 156-158.

<sup>438</sup> Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 205-206.

<sup>439</sup> Senkman, "The Right and Civilian Regimes, 1955-1976," 128.



that “beyond bigotry and a devotion to violence there was no clear line.”<sup>440</sup> The group quickly splintered, citing internal squabbles over ideology and tactics. Despite the fracturing, *Tacuara* associates adhered to their varying degrees of anti-Semitism. The Arab League would build alliances with some of these splinter groups, based on their shared anti-Zionism.<sup>441</sup> This cooperation materialized around the same time that the Israeli government covertly entered Argentina and captured Adolf Eichmann. The conflict that ensued reflected just how deeply the Palestine question had penetrated Argentine politics and society.

#### *Eichmann operation unleashes Arab and Israeli conflict*

The Palestine dilemma, both practically and conceptually, resided in Argentine politics and society by the time of the Eichmann operation. Interestingly, the Israeli government initially complicated its situation by concocting rumors that the war criminal was found in Kuwait, although Ben-Gurion claimed this “alleged information” originated in Germany.<sup>442</sup> By incorrectly associating an Arab country with its operation, Israel immediately contributed an unflattering narrative to its side of the internationalized conflict. The accusation ensured the Eichmann affair would become part of the global story in the minds of those sympathetic to or affiliated with the Palestine dilemma.

The story became more than Israel circumventing a feckless extradition process to ensure justice was served. Instead, to some, it represented the sinister proclivities of the Jewish state.

<sup>440</sup> Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 205.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid; Senkman, “The Right and Civilian Regimes, 1955-1976,” 128.

<sup>442</sup> David Ben-Gurion, *Israel-A Personal History* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1971), 574; Raanan Rein writes that Fritz Bauer, the German Public Prosecutor and Mossad Chief, Isser Harel, had encouraged rumors that Eichmann was found in Kuwait, similar to other stories of Nazis hiding in the Arab World, even before the capture. See *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 174.

On May 23, 1960 New York Times headline announced that the Nazi chief had been captured.<sup>443</sup> David Ben-Gurion did not announce details of the capture, but within days the international community knew Eichmann had been apprehended in Argentina. The Arab press throughout the Middle East was “uniformly hostile, ranging from bitter attacks on Ben-Gurion as a Jewish prototype of Adolf Hitler, to a glorification of the defendant as a Nazi hero,” according to a 1961 Anti-Defamation League summary.<sup>444</sup> The operation prompted immediate backlash from nationalists in government and leftist organizations throughout Argentina. President Frondizi found himself under enormous pressure to take action against Israel. The Israeli Ambassador, Arie Levavi, anticipated the fallout and drafted a letter to the Argentine government expressing the Israeli government’s regret that a “group of volunteers...themselves survivors of the massacre” possibly violated Argentine law or “interfered” with Argentine sovereign rights. Nevertheless, he requested that the government recognize Eichmann’s “extraordinary” crimes, and hoped Argentina would “show understanding” for Israel.<sup>445</sup> Frondizi, himself not associated with the resurgence of nationalist anti-Semitism, would not survive if he did not respond. The nationalists within the military, yet again, demanded Frondizi’s loyalty. The Argentine president officially severed diplomatic relations with Israel and declared Israel’s ambassador “persona non grata” on July 22, 1960.<sup>446</sup> The decision appeased nationalists inside the government, but it could not stop the subsequent anti-Semitic attacks throughout Argentina.

Nazi sympathizers and nationalist organizations in Argentina plotted and carried out attacks against Jewish establishments and citizens in response to Eichmann's abduction. In fact, two of Eichmann’s sons, Nick and Dieter, had notified their contacts in *Tacuara* within hours of

<sup>443</sup> Lawrence Fellows, “Israel Seizes Nazi Chief of Extermination of Jews,” *New York Times*, May 23, 1960.

<sup>444</sup> Anti-Defamation League, Memorandum of Record, August, 14, 1961.

<sup>445</sup> Arie Levavi quoted in “Israeli Note to Argentina on Eichmann,” *New York Times*, June 7, 1960.

<sup>446</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 186.

their father's disappearance, believing that the Israelis were responsible. Soon after, the two sons, armed with weapons, stormed a Jewish synagogue after receiving a tip that the Israelis were holding the Nazi criminal in the basement.<sup>447</sup> However, once news outlets confirmed that Eichmann had been taken to Jerusalem, *Tacuara* members hatched plans to kidnap the Israeli ambassador and bomb the Israeli Embassy, although neither operation materialized. The University of Buenos Aires was defaced with swastikas, and shouts of "Death to the Jews" could be heard during a violent nationalist protest outside the medical building. On August 7, 1960, a group of nationalists attacked Jewish students at a local high school. One was seriously wounded from gunfire, while a handful of others were slightly hurt. Then in August 1961, a group of Argentine-Jews were attacked while attending an agricultural training camp. The *Tacuara* members completely destroyed the camp and left several injured. In perhaps the most violent response to the Eichmann affair, attackers kidnapped and tortured a teenage girl named Graciela Narcisa Sirota three weeks after Eichmann's hanging on June 1, 1962. The assailants beat and burned their victim before tattooing a swastika on her chest, claiming it was revenge for Eichmann.<sup>448</sup> Between the kidnapping in May 1960 and Eichmann's execution in June 1962, Argentine-Jews found themselves the targets of violence unseen in Argentina since the early twentieth-century.

The sustained nature of these attacks is particularly important since Arab League representatives in Argentina had established connections with nationalist organizations before the Eichmann capture. According to David Rock, some nationalists claimed Arab League representative in Buenos Aires, Hussein Triki, "had instigated these incidents...[and] was now

<sup>447</sup> Bascomb, *Hunting Eichmann*, 265.

<sup>448</sup> "Protest Strike By Argentine Jews," June 27, 1962, *Time*; June 26, 1962, *Jerusalem Post*; Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 206-217.

paying *Tacuara* to attack Jews and synagogues.”<sup>449</sup> Triki, an outspoken opponent of Zionism and former compatriot of Nazi collaborator Haj Amin El-Husseini, regularly engaged in anti-Semitic discourse and published anti-Zionist literature in Argentina since his arrival in the mid-1950s. Triki’s work forged connections between nationalist elements and the Arab League. In fact, he had become a fixture at anti-Zionist gatherings. During one such occasion, Triki announced that Zionism was the greatest enemy of the world, which received “applause” from nationalists and likeminded politicians in the audience.<sup>450</sup> Outside nationalist circles, Triki also made sure to play on Argentine sensibilities, telling a Catholic audience on one occasion that Jews had desecrated Christian Holy sites in Israel and that the church faced persecution in the Jewish state.<sup>451</sup> Triki went on to champion a long list of audacious claims that retraced Jewish subversion in Argentina to the early twentieth-century. Triki suggested that Argentine-Jews were connected to Jewish paramilitaries who operated in Palestine before the founding of Israel and remained beholden to certain Israeli political parties based on those associations. He went on to allege, among other things, that Zionists had taken over the education of local Argentine-Jews and accused Moshe Tov, the Argentine-born Israeli diplomat, of being a member of Israel’s intelligence service.<sup>452</sup>

Perhaps his most notable contribution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in Argentina involved rhetorical manipulation. Triki employed an anti-Zionism position, which he declared to be against Israel, but not necessary anti-Jewish. “I am a Semite,” he once claimed, suggesting, that he could not therefore be anti-Semitic. Zionism was the “common enemy” of the Arabs and

<sup>449</sup> Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 205.

<sup>450</sup> Asociación Judeo-Argentina de Estudios Históricos, *Argentina, el antisemitismo y los judíos: informe redactado en el 1964 por el movimiento socialista Mordejai Anilevich perteneciente al partido Mapam en Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1987), 9.

<sup>451</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>452</sup> Hussein Triki, *He aquí, Palestine: El sionismo al desnudo* (Madrid: Afrodisio Aguado, 1977), 403-408.

Argentines. All of them should stand together as a bulwark against its expansion, he argued.<sup>453</sup> He also claimed that Israel's mere existence caused Argentina's economic and political problems.<sup>454</sup> He went as far as to accuse Israel of a financial "invasion" of Argentina.<sup>455</sup> Despite his claims of only having anti-Zionist convictions, his words did little more than link Argentine-Jews with Israel in the minds of those with whom he associated. He repeated accusations that the Israeli government continued to meddle in Argentine affairs and suggested that the Argentine-Jewish communities welcomed this interference.<sup>456</sup> He implied that the Jewish state succeeded in Argentina because of the support of Argentine-Jews. His rhetoric tied Jewish ethnicity to Israel, effectively making them one in the same. By affirming nationalists' questions of Jewish-Argentine loyalties and broader characterizations of Israel as a new form of imperialism, he successfully merged the two. The Eichmann episode embodied this critical integration of ideas.

The cooperation between Triki and nationalist elements in Argentina was evident in nationalist propaganda. Although technically still outlawed, *Tacuara* operated relatively freely, often holding press conferences to address its concerns. At one such conference, *Tacuara* leader, Ezcurra Uriburu, announced that his members were not anti-Semitic, but "enemies of Jewry." He went on to say that Jews "are the servants of Israeli imperialism" and violated Argentina's national sovereignty with the capture of Eichmann. "In this struggle we have much in common with Nasser," he concluded.<sup>457</sup> The parallels Uriburu drew between nationalists' convictions and the Arab plight stressed how close the two groups had become. In fact, Saudi Arabia's

<sup>453</sup> Hussein Triki quoted in DAIA, *Informe de las actividades realizadas por el Consejo Directivo* (Aug. 1962-Sep 1963).

<sup>454</sup> Juan José Sebrelli, *La cuestión judía en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo, 1964), 245.

<sup>455</sup> Triki, *He aquí, Palestine*, 419.

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid*, 404-405.

<sup>457</sup> Ezcurra Uriburu quoted in Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina*, 206.

ambassador to the United Nations openly declared *Tacuara's* operations a model for Third World liberation.<sup>458</sup> Joe Baxter, an Argentine nationalist, felt so dedicated to the Arab cause that he led a splinter organization that modeled itself after anti-imperial ideals of the Algerian Revolution. He also adopted Triki's logic of being anti-Zionist, but not anti-Semitic. Baxter eventually became a fugitive after several failed criminal plots in Argentina, and shortly thereafter, found safe haven in Egypt and then Libya.<sup>459</sup> Back in Argentina, a delegation from the American Jewish Committee provided public officials with evidence of Tikri's nefarious activities. The material proved serious enough that the Argentine government expelled him from the country in 1964. Some leaders within the Arab League also expressed dissatisfaction with Tikri's performance and quietly proclaimed it a complete failure.<sup>460</sup>

Questions remain as to whether Arab officials funded the post-Eichmann violence against Jews in Argentina. There is little doubt, however, of Arab League support for the targeting. The cooperation between Arab and nationalist forces during this period would result in lasting relationship. The Triki-nationalist alliance and the subsequent violence they unleashed upon Jewish-Argentines after the Eichmann affair illustrate how Argentina had become the new battle ground in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moreover, the relationship between Argentina and Israel would never be the same.

## **Aftermath**

After the dust settled, some Argentine officials remained bitter over the intrusion. The bitterness in Argentina over the Palestine question and the issue of Israel quickly reached

<sup>458</sup> DAIA, *Informe de las actividades realizadas por el Consejo Directivo* (Aug 1962 – Sep 1963), 11.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid*, 207.

<sup>460</sup> DAIA, "Triki Fue condenado a muerte por los mismos árabes," *La Liga Arabe cree mover a los argentinos como peónes de su ajedrez* (Buenos Aires, 1964).

officials at the United Nations. By the late 1960s, the international body remained the primary platform for addressing disputes and airing grievances associated with the Arab-Israeli issue. Palestinian representatives and those sympathetic to the Palestinian cause recognized the usefulness of the organization as a means to internationalize their plight.<sup>461</sup> Likewise, some Argentine officials saw the United Nations as a safe place to challenge Israel and Zionism. Fueled by lingering anger over the Eichmann capture, the Argentine Ambassador to the United Nations and nationalist supporter, Mario Amadeo, was the most vocal. Amadeo had demanded Eichmann's return with "appropriate reparation" for the kidnapping in the months immediately following the operation. He later gave a speech defending the harboring of Nazis and compared Nazi war criminals to political refugees, such as the Jews who had escaped to Argentina to avoid European and Ottoman persecution in the early twentieth-century.<sup>462</sup> This line of reasoning naturally shocked Israeli officials who believed the speech to be inexcusable.

Nationalists had hoped that Amadeo's comments on the international stage would keep the pressure on Frondizi and Israel. However, they were sorely disappointed. On August 3, approximately two months after the operation, Israel and Argentina announced that the incident was closed. Officials announced from Jerusalem and Buenos Aires that both governments finally agreed to "comply with the resolution of the Security Council" and wished "friendly relations between the two countries [would] be advanced." Although the statement made no mention of reparations or reinstating diplomatic relations, new ambassadors were in place before the year's end.<sup>463</sup>

<sup>461</sup> Chamberlain, *The Global Offensive*, 6-7.

<sup>462</sup> Mario Amadeo quoted in "Inquiry Is Ordered," August 3, 1960, *New York Times*; Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 184-188.

<sup>463</sup> "Israel, Argentina Declare Nazi Case A Closed Incident," *New York Times*, August 3, 1960; Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 119-126.

Although relations had been restored, reestablishing trust remained elusive. Israel began in earnest trying to repair the fallout from the Eichmann affair by inking a new trade agreement that favored Argentina. The Jewish state also opened the first Israel-Argentina friendship league in Buenos Aires to “improve the Israeli public’s acquaintance with Argentina and to enhance Argentina’s image” through cultural relations.<sup>464</sup> The Israeli government then went as far as delivering the priceless Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit to Buenos Aires in September 1960. This move seemed especially bold since anti-Semitic attacks continued throughout the city. Although the both governments claimed the exhibit was merely part of Argentina’s independence celebration, the *New York Times* concluded with “little doubt...that the quality and breadth of the exposition [was] connected with a more topical development –the case of Adolf Eichmann.”<sup>465</sup> Despite Israel’s effort to repair trust between the two nations, the Eichmann affair had caused irrevocable harm. Argentina had cooled towards Israel. The Eichmann affair proved to be a turning point in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Argentina.

### **Years Leading to 1967 War**

Joseph Tulchin describes the 1960s as a time of unworkable dilemmas. “Hardliners kept Peronists from voting,” he states, “which meant that any regime governed without the approval of that numerous portion of the electorate.” The minority governments then realized they needed a satisfied labor sector to assure economic prosperity. As a result, the government would lure Peronists back into cooperation with promises of political participation. Yet, once the government and Peronists “grew closer,” some in the armed forces would become wary and oust the leadership. The sequence of events would then repeat itself. The fits-and-starts of governing

<sup>464</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 192.

<sup>465</sup> “Argentines See Dead Sea Scrolls: Israelis Exhibit Fragment of Document and Many Other Biblical Items,” *New York Times*, September 25, 1960.



caused high levels of inflation and made Argentina vulnerable to any fluctuation in the international markets. The political manipulation of groups within Argentina then led to societal conflict. “The tense instability precipitated terrorist violence,” Tulchin concludes.<sup>466</sup>

Fronidizi fell victim to this cycle. Argentina’s growing dependence on U.S. loans under Frondizi met with a predictable resistance from the nationalists and left-wing organizations.<sup>467</sup> However, Frondizi’s accommodation of Perónistas precipitated his downfall. In the 1962 elections, Peronists reasserted themselves by winning governorships in at least seven provinces, including Buenos Aires. Powerful elements in the armed forces feared these victories would lead to a “Peronist president” and immediately forced Frondizi and the Vice President to resign in March 1962.<sup>468</sup> The military then appointed Senate president, José María Guido, to office. Some Argentines characterized the military’s absolute, yet decentralized control over the transition of power as a “*la ley de acefalía*” or the law of headlessness. One U.S. official called the Argentine political system a “dictatorship lacking a dictator.”<sup>469</sup> Guido quickly reinstated anti-Peronist policies and had congress annul the 1962 election results. Yet, naval leaders remained unsatisfied with the mere repeal of election results and were insistent on complete disbarment of Peronists in the 1963 elections. In response, the navy attempted to overthrow the Guido administration in April of that same year. The coup did not succeed, and the elections moved ahead as planned. Centrist Arturo Umberto Illía won the presidential election. Illía

<sup>466</sup> Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 132.

<sup>467</sup> Telegram from Department of State to the Embassy in Argentina, September 27, 1961, 357-359, *FRUS*, vol. XII *American Republics, 1961-1963* (Washington D.C.: GPO, 1964).

<sup>468</sup> “Telegram from The Embassy in Argentina to The Department of State,” March 19, 1962, *FRUS*, vol. XII, *American Republics, 1961-1963*, 363-364.

<sup>469</sup> “Letter from the Ambassador to Argentina (McClintock) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs (Martin),” May 31, 1962, *FRUS*, Vol. XII, *American Republics 1961-1963*, 386.

immediately reinstated Peronists' participation in Argentine elections.<sup>470</sup> This cycle would continue for another two decades.

The political chaos naturally disrupted economic progress as each administration instituted its own vision of reform only to be replaced with another administration of opposing ideology. A weakened economy also contributed to an unstable society. Amid the uncertainty, nationalists continued to carry out anti-Semitic attacks with impunity. Under Guido, *Tacuara* had "free rein" to distribute anti-Semitic literature, while authorities asserted that anti-Semitism in Argentina had been exaggerated and claimed no evidence existed tying *Tacuara* to the "wave of anti-Semitic events in Argentina." The renewed freedom to operate led nationalist leader, Alberto Ezcurra, to reiterate in a September 1962 *Tacuara* recruitment ceremony that the organization's mission was to fight against capitalism, Zionism, and communism.<sup>471</sup>

As protection against anti-Semitic attacks waned, rumors circulated that local Jewish youths were banding together to form independent militias. These rumors angered nationalists and anti-Zionists in the Argentine government. Many of these officials suspected that Israeli agents were training these local Jewish youths. Arab League officials used the opportunity to stoke these fears by suggesting that "some twenty-six training camps for Israeli military personnel [were] operating on Argentine territory," where even the Spanish language was "forbidden."<sup>472</sup> These concerns prompted anti-Semites in government, including Juan Carlos Cornejo Linares, to call for investigations into Zionist activity in Argentina. Cornejo Linares had previously called Frondizi "the first Zionist president of Argentina" after his decision to

<sup>470</sup> Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987*, 320-367; Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States*, 122-149; Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 132-160; Jill Hedges, *Argentina: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 198-244.

<sup>471</sup> "Argentine Youths in Nazi Group Salute and Cry: Hail Tacuara!," *New York Times*, September 15, 1962; Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 220-226.

<sup>472</sup> Raanan Rein and Ilan Diner, "Unfounded Fears, Inflated Hopes, Passionate Memories: Jewish Self-Defence in 1960s Argentina," in *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 11:3 (2012): 357-376.

reinstitute relations with Israel in the wake of its “terrorist action” in capturing Eichmann.<sup>473</sup>

Now, Cornejo Linares accused Israel of subversion, claiming to have evidence that the infamous Jewish Haganah militia was operating in Argentina in collusion with the unassimilated Jewish population.<sup>474</sup> The increasingly volatile political conditions and lack of economic certainty forced centrist Illía into action.

### *Balancing Argentina’s positions*

Illía had inherited a divided government, a dominant military, and a powerful nationalist movement bothered with the expansion of U.S. economic influence. Illía responded to nationalists’ concerns by canceling private oil contracts with transnational and American oil companies. In reaction, the United States redirected its Argentine aid to the military and away from the Illía government.<sup>475</sup> Interestingly, this move came on the heels the Cuban Missile Crisis. David Sheinin argues that the military aid was “compensation” for the armed forces’ support in the blockade of Cuba during the crisis.<sup>476</sup> Indeed, during a discussion with the Argentine Foreign Minister Carlos Manuel Muniz in January 1963, President Kennedy expressed appreciation for Argentina’s participation in the blockade. Their presence “prevented propaganda of the United States ganging up against a small Latin American nation...[and]...encouraged other Latin American countries to come in.”<sup>477</sup> The timing was perfect. The U.S. could reward the military establishment and penalize Illía without explicitly doing either. By doing so, however, the U.S. pulled Argentina deeper into its sphere of

<sup>473</sup> Juan Carlos Cornejo Linares quoted in *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>474</sup> Cornejo Linares, *El nuevo orden sionista en la Argentina*, 27-28.

<sup>475</sup> Dustin Walcher, “Petroleum Pitfalls: The United States, Argentine Nationalism, and the 1963 Oil Crisis,” *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 1 (2013): 24-57, 55.

<sup>476</sup> Sheinin, *Argentina and the United States*, 126.

<sup>477</sup> John F. Kennedy quoted in “Memorandum of Conversation, “Call of Argentine Foreign Minister on President Kennedy,” January 22, 1963, *FRUS*, Vol. XII, *American Republics 1961-1963*, 406.

influence. The move would embolden nationalists. More importantly, the aid served to strengthen the relationship between the Argentine armed forces and the American government. The situation would prove pivotal when the Chief of the Army, Juan Carlos Onganía, overthrew Illía three years later.

### **Onganía and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War**

Balancing sovereignty and the nationalist influence with a need for foreign aid had become more difficult as the political conflict in Argentina worsened. Under Onganía, American and Argentine interests intertwined just as issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict became more pronounced. On the international stage, however, Argentina continued to exercise autonomy, perhaps to pacify its powerful nationalist movement. Raanan Rein concludes that Argentina refused to consider how its relations with Israel would impact its relations with the United States.<sup>478</sup> While true, the Onganía government did take into account American perceptions of how it addressed the broader Arab-Israeli conflict. And the 1967 Arab-Israeli War put Argentina's international and domestic policies under a microscope.

The 1967 Arab-Israeli War, also known as the Six-Day War, began in the early morning of June 5 with a surprise aerial attack by Israeli warplanes on neighboring Arab forces in Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. Approximately two hundred Israeli aircraft took off for targets in Egypt and Syria. The first wave of bombers destroyed Egyptian runways at critical military bases in both the Sinai Desert and in the more populated interior, west of the Suez Canal. The second and third waves targeted idle Egyptian aircraft parked along the now cratered runway as Egyptian pilots scrambled for cover from Israeli aircraft strafing. Israeli troops dominated the Sinai and penetrated the so-called Egyptian military curtain along the Suez Canal.

<sup>478</sup> Rein, *Argentina, Israel, and the Jews*, 195.

Israel's speed and lethality were impressive elsewhere. The Jewish state defeated Jordanian troops and secured access to the Wailing Wall, the last vestige of the Jewish temple, for the first time in nineteen years. By the war's end, Israeli troops occupied the West Bank, the Old City, and Jerusalem. In the North, Israel suffered heavy losses before finally advancing so far into Syria that the country's leadership believed Israeli forces would capture Damascus. A ceasefire halted the advance, but not before Israel commandeered the most important position in the north, the Golan Heights. Israel defeated Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in six days, thus earning the moniker Six-Day War. The conflict was one of most lopsided in Middle East history and brought Arab pride to its lowest level in generations.

The Israeli government claimed the June 5 surprise attack was a preemptive strike against mounting aggression by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser. Beginning in January 1967, the Egyptian government pressured the United Nations to remove its emergency force stationed in the Sinai Desert, in place as a consequence of the 1956 Suez Crisis. After five months of dialogue the U.N. leadership relented and began removing peacekeeping personnel. In turn, Nasser immediately began re-militarizing the Sinai. The Israeli government was more concerned with rumors that Nasser would close the Straits of Tiran, and thus access to the port of Eilat. Israeli worries proved accurate when Nasser closed the straits on May 22, 1967.<sup>479</sup>

Nasser claimed Israel's military posture prompted his preemptive action. The Egyptian president announced the closure of the straits only after receiving, what were later determined to be false, Soviet reports that Israeli forces were massing along the northern Israel-Syria border. For years, Syria had expressed frustration at the growth of Jewish settlements in the disputed border region and frequently mortared the area to halt the expansion. This history gave reason to

<sup>479</sup> Michael B. Oren, *Six Days War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 104.

believe the Soviet intelligence. Nasser also had experienced the surprise attack in the Suez years before. Past experiences gave validity to suspicions surrounding Israeli mobilization.

For the United States, the situation represented another facet of the Cold War. As the Soviets courted Arab countries, U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson drew closer to Israel. Before the conflict, the American government maintained a cordial, but restrained relationship with the Jewish state, offering limited military and economic assistance. Preoccupied with the costly war in Vietnam and the domestic Civil Rights movement, Johnson preferred diplomatic remedies rather than the Soviet-style intervention. The president wanted to avoid entangling U.S. forces in another anti-Communist campaign. Despite U.S. policy, Nasser claimed that Israel's resounding victory was only achieved through the help of American and British forces. President Johnson called Nasser's statement the "Big Lie" and was angered further when Nasser refused to reopen the straits and refused the deployment of United Nations peacekeeping forces to the Sinai. In return, U.S. turned towards Israel, as many Arab nations aligned with the Soviets.<sup>480</sup> The Arab-Israeli conflict became a proxy battle of the Soviet-American Cold War.<sup>481</sup>

The proxy war played out most visibly in the U.N. Security Council. As a non-permanent member of the council, Argentina found itself in a difficult situation. Onganía's policies had pulled Argentina into the United States' sphere of influence, but the Argentine president was determined to retain appearances of independence. When the Soviet Union presented a resolution that condemning Israel as the aggressor, council members defeated the proposal, helped along by Argentina's abstention.<sup>482</sup> Argentina made sure its position, however, was not completely beholden to the United States. Around the same time that the Soviet

<sup>480</sup> Ibid, 226.

<sup>481</sup> Jeremy Bowen, *Six Days: How the 1967 War Shaped the Middle East* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2003); Frank Brenchley, *Britain, the Six Day War and Its Aftermath* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Tom Segev, *1967: Israel, the War, and the Year That Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2005).

<sup>482</sup> Drew Middleton, "Security Council Bars Soviet Move to Censure Israel," *New York Times*, June 14, 1967.

resolution failed to pass, the American government requested Argentina's support for a U.S.-sponsored resolution. Thus far, the U.S. resolution had "shaky" support and desperately needed Argentina. Moreover, U.S. officials feared Argentina would vote for the undesirable Indian resolution, which included "fuzziness of guarantees" regarding Israel's freedom of navigation.<sup>483</sup> In a November 11 cable to the Argentine foreign ministry, Secretary of State Dean Rusk requested Argentina's support for the U.S. resolution claiming that the American resolution incorporated the principles of the Latin American resolution, submitted in June 1967, to the emergency session of the General Assembly. Argentina felt strongly about the Latin American resolution, evidenced by its unwillingness to support any other variation.<sup>484</sup> Argentina had tried to appear unbiased by submitting a 'Latin American' resolution that called on the Israeli and Arab governments to protect refugees, civilians, and prisoners of war. Arabs balked. The resolution, they argued, endorsed Israel's actions and its alleged violations of the ceasefire. An Arab spokesman added that so long as an alliance existed between Israel and the United States, Arab countries would rely on the Communist bloc.<sup>485</sup> Nevertheless, the Johnson administration hoped that underscoring the similarities between the United States and Latin American resolutions would earn Argentina's support. Rusk also requested that Argentina not support the Indian draft, because Israel "would be unwilling to cooperate" based on the requirements within the text. This issue would then "provide the USSR with political gains in the Arab World to the detriment of western interests."<sup>486</sup> The strategy failed.

<sup>483</sup> Memorandum for Mr. Rostow, "Situation in New York," 10/27/67, "United Nations, Vol. 7," Agency File, National Security File (NSF), Box 68, Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) Library.

<sup>484</sup> Cable, Buenos Aires 1227, #18b, 11/14/67, Folder "Argentina, 10/1/67-1/20/67" Special Head of State Correspondence, NSF, Box 3, LBJ Library.

<sup>485</sup> Drew Middleton, "Security Council Bars Soviet Move to Censure Israel," *New York Times*, June 14, 1967.

<sup>486</sup> Dean Rusk quoted in Cable, Buenos Aires 1227, #18b, 11/14/67, Folder "Argentina, 10/1/67-1/20/67" Special Head of State Correspondence, NSF, Box 3, LBJ Library.

The Argentine foreign minister responded to Rusk's request with platitudes and expressions of appreciation for the cordial dialogue and the United States' goals for peace. The Foreign Minister said, however, that his government would continue to promote the "solution" authored by Latin American countries put forth in the special emergency session. He added that despite the similarities between the two resolutions, his government found the American solution too "dogmatic" to receive Argentine support.<sup>487</sup>

Finally, the British-authored resolution 242 won the support of the Security Council and seemed poised to gain the approval of Egypt, Jordan, and Israel in November 1967. Yet, the vague language surrounding Israel's retreat sparked a new round of debates. The resolution called for lasting peace in the Middle East and a withdrawal of Israeli forces from land taken in the conflict.<sup>488</sup> Syria and the PLO complained that the resolution did not specify the occupied territories Israel had to relinquish. Here, Argentina stood with other Third World nations demanding reassurances from United Kingdom that the language of "Israeli withdraw" meant a total withdraw from all territories occupied by Israel as a result of war.<sup>489</sup> Syria waited for no such assurance. The Arab nation and the PLO rejected the resolution as a "conspiracy to confirm the Zionist presence in Palestine."<sup>490</sup>

The American government had information that the Soviets were planning to use this disagreement to stymie the execution of the resolution. President Johnson sent a letter directly to Onganía, this time requesting support for the implementation of the latest peace accord:

<sup>487</sup> Cable, Buenos Aires 1226, #18d, 11/14/67, Folder "Argentina, 10/1/67-1/20/67" Special Head of State Correspondence, NSF, Box 3, LBJ Library.

<sup>488</sup> United Nations. *Security Council Official Records Twenty Second Year*. 1382nd MEETING, November 22, 1967.

Available at

<http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/b792301807650d6685256cef0073cb80/9f5f09a80bb6878b0525672300565063?OpenDocument>. Accessed on May 2, 2015.

<sup>489</sup> Ibid.

<sup>490</sup> "Resolution of U.N. Rejected By Syria," *New York Times*, November 30, 1967.



“I am writing to you again in light of a new development just yesterday to ask that we stand together in the face of a move by the Soviet Union in the United Nations Security Council, whose purpose is to divide the Western world and promote Soviet influence in the Middle East.”

The U.S. president relayed the need for Argentina to join the “broad consensus” behind the resolution that called for the deployment of a “non-prejudicial” United Nations peacekeeping official. Johnson believed Latin American support would ensure “grudging acquiescence of both sides [Israel and neighboring Arab governments]” and lead to an agreement. He assured Onganía that while Israel and Nasser “would prefer changes” to the text, all parties were ready to accept the deal. The Soviets, however, had submitted an additional resolution intended as a “spoiling operation in the interests of Soviet objectives” seeking to defeat the current resolution and “thereby [keep] the political pot boiling in the Middle East with the Soviet appearing as champions of the Arab cause.” The U.S. president appealed to Onganía to “instruct” his representative to offer “firm support” of the Western-sponsored resolution “promptly,” and discourage entertaining amendments which would “only serve Soviet interests.”<sup>491</sup>

Onganía responded to the urgent memo by acknowledging the gravity of the crisis and a called the resolution “essential” to overcoming hostilities. Onganía meandered through accolades of U.S. objectives and assurances of Argentina’s belief in the principles behind the United Kingdom resolution. The Argentine president, however, offered the same response as his foreign minister days earlier, calling the resolution too “dogmatic.” He reiterated his belief that the Latin American resolution was the key to establishing lasting peace in the Middle East and for promoting hemispheric solidarity.<sup>492</sup> The episode underscored Onganía’s unwillingness to sacrifice appearances of autonomy, despite the closer relationship with the United States.

<sup>491</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, Cable, Unnumbered DEPTTEL to Buenos Aires, #18, 11/20/67, Folder “Argentina, 10/1/67-1/20/67” Special Head of State Correspondence, NSF, Box 3, LBJ Library.

<sup>492</sup> Juan Carlos Onganía, Cable, Unnumbered DEPTTEL to Buenos Aires, #18, 11/20/67, Folder “Argentina, 10/1/67-1/20/67” Special Head of State Correspondence, NSF, Box 3, LBJ Library.

Although the resolution had passed the Security Council, others countries remained displeased with the language. The U.N. deployed Gunnar Jarring to the Middle East to negotiate the implementation of the resolution. Syria, the final holdout, agreed to the terms in 1973.

The Onganía regime faced a dilemma. The administration remained determined to maintain appearances of neutrality and continue its position as a champion of national sovereignty for smaller countries. However, the regime now faced a local rebellion from Peronists called the *Montoneros*. The suppression of leftist guerillas fighters in Argentina undermined the government's reputation in the developing world, one which was quickly coalescing around the Third World movement. Coincidentally, the Arab League also opened an official office in Buenos Aires in 1964, no longer having to rely on Arab embassies. The Arab League immediately began producing anti-Israeli propaganda.<sup>493</sup> More than ever before, these publications resonated with an increasingly leftist audience which came to identify with the anti-Zionist movement. *Montoneros*, in particular, embraced the cause and through their journal publication *Militancia*, espoused anti-Zionist rhetoric and championed the cause of the Palestinians. In some ways, the *Montoneros* saw themselves as Palestinians fighting against their own Israel in the Argentine government. In fact, the PLO would come to support the rebels.<sup>494</sup> Onganía found it difficult suppress the rebellion while trying to champion international policies favorable to the Third World. The Arab-Israeli conflict, now so entrenched in Argentine society, had become an issue that could no longer be handled through traditional neutrality.

<sup>493</sup> H.E. Ambassador Abdel Khalek Hassouna, *A Short Guide to the League of Arab States* (Arab League Press and Information Department, 1965), 34-35.

<sup>494</sup> Christine Hatzky and Jessica Stites Mor, "Latin American Transnational Solidarities: Contexts and Critical Research Paradigms," *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research*, 20:2 (2014): 127-140.

The U.S. had its own concerns. While Onganía had suppressed the Communist in Argentina, alliances still existed between “leftist” labor unions and anti-government students groups. “An alliance [between these two factions]...could create a major problem for the government,” one U.S. report read.<sup>495</sup> American officials also feared that a union of leftist forces would likely embolden like-minded Arab organizations in Argentina. In fact, years before the 1967 war, U.S. officials recognized the potential for Arab influence in these anti-government circles. U.S. Ambassador to Argentina, Robert McClintock, wrote in November 1963 that independent sources had confirmed that Perón was up to his “habitual tricks” in exile by coordinating his subversive activities with radical elements, like Nasser.<sup>496</sup> In a plan of action memorandum, the U.S. government instructed its intelligence officials to evaluate the influence of the “Nasserite army group” in Argentine political parties and requested that officials “discreetly” tell Perónist officials to “forestall any extremist Peronist link with...‘Nasserites.’”<sup>497</sup>

The U.S. government also remained concerned about continued anti-Semitism. During a meeting with Argentine Foreign Minister H.E. Costa Mendez, Morris Adram, the U.S. representative to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and the President of the American Jewish Committee, brought up the recurring outbreaks of violence against Argentine-Jews. Abram expressed his concern that the Onganía administration had previously hosted members of the *Tacuara*. Abram compared this to the U.S. president entertaining members of the Ku Klux Klan, which he called “gangsters.” The Foreign Minister dismissed *Tacuara* and explained the visit to be a singular and regrettable event, wholly unpopular within the government. Abram asked then if the Argentine government would offer a public condemnation of *Tacuara*. Mendez

<sup>495</sup> Report, “Restless Youth,” 09/68, “CIA Report, Restless Youth,” NSF, CIA File, Box 3, LBJ Library.

<sup>496</sup> Robert McClintock quoted in Cable, Buenos Aires to Secretary of State, 11/27/63, Folder “Argentina Vol. I” Country File: Latin American, NSF, Box 6, LBJ Library.

<sup>497</sup> “Plan of Action for Argentina,” *FRUS*, Vol. XII, *American Republics 1961-1963*, 390.

related that “the new Government had issued a formal statement opposing all totalitarian groups.” Condemning one group in name, he argued, was “to dignify the group and to draw more attention to it than it deserved.” Abram also mentioned the mass resignation of university professors and questioned whether Jewish instructors had faced special persecution, which Mendez called “absurd.”<sup>498</sup> Whether out of national pride or ignorance, Argentina was unwilling to address the escalating conflict within its borders.

The Onganía regime did try to reassure its Western allies by recasting itself as the truest form of Argentine authority. Onganía claimed in a published manifesto to be an “authentic democratic” government that best represented Argentina’s “Western and Christian” identity. The publication called for vigorous relations with the “motherland” - those European countries that had “nurtured” the Christian culture - and the neutralization of Marxist and Communist forces in Argentina.<sup>499</sup> U.S. officials privately called this “emphasis on conservatism and tradition” an attempt to convince people of the administration’s validity. As a self-appointed representative of Argentine identity, the government felt free to “suppress antigovernment demonstrations” with little sympathy for dissent.<sup>500</sup> Assertiveness led to the infamous *La Noche de los Bastones Largos* ("The Night of the Long Batons") when government forces violently removed students and faculty from the University of Buenos Aires after they expressed opposition to the military government’s intervention in academia.

Meanwhile, some people in Argentina understood Onganía’s manifesto differently. According to scholar Victor Mirelman, certain intellectuals felt the policy “had the connotation of some-thing permanent” and was a direct outgrowth of past ideas; "Western" was understood

<sup>498</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, “Anti-Semitism in Argentina,” 09/26/66, “Argentina, Volume II” NSF, Country File, Box 6, LBJ Library.

<sup>499</sup> Presidencia de la Nación, *Acta de la Revolución Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1966), 3.

<sup>500</sup> Report, “Restless Youth,” 09/68, “CIA Report, Restless Youth,” NSF, CIA File, Box 3, LBJ Library.

to exclude Eastern or Oriental, and "Christian" to exclude non-Christians or Jews."<sup>501</sup> A Central Intelligence Agency report pointed out that Onganía had, in fact, put Catholic militants in power, rather than apolitical, non-militant "conservatives" as he had promised after coming power. Many believed the new government "would not only move to the right, but would in time [show] similarities to some harsher aspects of the Franco regime in Spain." The same report argued, however, that the move to the right did not portend anti-Jewish actions. For example, recent moves by the Onganía administration against credit cooperatives, which some feared was a "recurrence of anti-Semitism" since Jews mostly used cooperatives, actually were designed to eliminate funding for Communists. "Argentine intelligence had reported that some two thirds of the more than 1,000 credit cooperatives were either Communist-controlled or participated in a Communist-controlled clearing-house system." Since the crackdown, the government has "gone out of its way to reassure the nation's Jews that they will be treated equally and fairly," the report concluded.<sup>502</sup>

The regime remained dedicated to perfecting its version of Argentine identity by elevating the importance of Catholic, European roots. Onganía also tried to win friends in Washington through aggressive anti-Communist strategies. Nevertheless, the Argentine president dismissed questions of persecution or ethnic tension. He refused to address the Arab-Israeli conflict waging within Argentina's borders. Despite offering assurances to anyone who felt threatened (other than Communist or Communist sympathizers), the Onganía administration left the environment primed for domestic and international exploitation.

## **The Return of Perón**

<sup>501</sup> Mirelman, "Attitude Towards Jews," 211.

<sup>502</sup> Report, "Outlook for the Onganía Regime in Argentina," 11/04/66, Folder "Argentina Vol. II," Current Intelligence Weekly Special Report CIA, NSF, Country File, Box 6, LBJ Library.

Onganía's treatment of ethnic strife as isolated or even non-existent incidents prevented his government from seeing the connection to broader issues involving Palestine. He did suppress Communists within Argentina winning favor with the Christian west, but his failures to acknowledge other foreign influences left the country and ultimately his government vulnerable to problems. In particular, the failure to eradicate the *Montoneros* insurgency or confront its backers brought down his administration. Argentine Army General Roberto Marcelo Levingston Laborda led a successful coup, deposing Onganía in June 1970. Levingston Laborda's reign was short-lived, however. In March 1971, Alejandro Agustín Lanusse became the 38<sup>th</sup> president of Argentina after overthrowing Levingston Laborda. Lanusse took a hard-lined approach against the Peronist guerillas, arrested political dissents, and outlawed Peronists participation in local elections. Operating in exile, Perón used the recent suppression to build momentum for his return. The upcoming elections, planned for March 1973, and the political unrest caused by the growing strength of Peronist guerilla fighters provided the ideal opportunity for Perón to recapture the presidency. His plan centered on Héctor Cámpora, a loyal *Peronista*. Perón prepared Cámpora to enter the elections as a legitimate candidate. With an electoral victory, Cámpora would resign, expedite Perón's return, and hold new elections. A victorious Cámpora took office in May 1973 and immediately executed the plan. Cámpora stepped down in July 1973, one month after Perón had returned from eighteen years of exile in Spain to mobs of *Peronistas*. Unfortunately, snipers fired into the crowds awaiting his arrival, killing scores of people.<sup>503</sup> The continued violence and political instability swung public opinion in Perón's favor as the only candidate in the July 1973 elections who could stabilize the country. Perón returned to office for a third term in October 1973.

<sup>503</sup> Rock, *Argentina*, 355-360; Tulchin, *Argentina and the United States*, 136-142.

### *Arab influence*

The political instability had allowed for a rapid expansion of Arab influence in Argentina. In particular, the Arab League political campaign had attracted support from Arab-Argentines and many anti-Semitic organizations. The invasion of Middle East politics made Argentina the Latin American front in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Palestine and concepts of liberation, and Israel and ideas of imperialism, became synonymous in the minds of many in Argentina. The battle of ideas and perceptions surrounding the Middle East grew in intensity. Unlike its past efforts at neutrality and balance in policy, the Argentine government now had very little room to maneuver. There was no space for equivocation. When Perón returned to power, Arabs reemerged as the favorite.

If there were any questions about Perón's affinity for the Arab World, his second term as president left little doubt of his position. Perón reinvigorated Argentina's diplomacy in the Middle East and resurrected economic ties with several Arab nations. Known as "Operation Arab World," Perón's program aimed to develop new markets for Argentine exports, while securing oil agreements. Perón officially announced his plans to renew relations with the Arab World during a meeting with eight Arab ambassadors from Algeria, Iraq, Kuwait, Syria, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Tunisia at his mansion on April 6, 1973. He then dispatched Argentine-Arab and political scientist, Dr. Faysal K. Noufouri, on a six-week mission to Arab capitals to promote direct trade, procure investment capital, and establish permanent routes through the Arab World for the Argentine airline and shipping company, *Aerolíneas Argentinas*. Noufouri told the press that he hoped to "strengthen the traditional links of blood and friendship"

between Argentina and the Arab World “in order to complete the formation of the Third World and conclude mutual collaboration for defense against common enemies.”<sup>504</sup> Reminiscent of 1947, Perón proclaimed that Argentina would ally with the Third World movement. To make this point, Perón renegotiated contracts with its two largest oil importers in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait because of their close relationship to the First World. Perón then inked new oil agreements with Libya in 1974, making the North African country Argentina’s single greatest supplier. In fact, Argentina received such a favorable deal from Libya for oil - prices usually reserved for other Arab countries - that an Argentine government official called Argentina “an Arab country for the purposes of oil prices.”<sup>505</sup>

Perón then reinstated his third position policies at the United Nations. Before his death in July 1974, the Argentine president declared support for the Palestinian cause and committed to supporting Arabs in several resolutions. In October, Argentina voted in favor of allowing the PLO to “participate in deliberations of the General Assembly on the question of Palestine in plenary meetings.”<sup>506</sup> Argentina also strategically abstained on other resolutions addressing Palestinian issues to Israel’s detriment, much like the partition vote in 1947. In return, Argentina received an increase of foreign capital from Arab League countries, which according to scholar Edward Milkenky, raised annual Arab investment in Argentina from \$24 million to \$215 million by 1976.<sup>507</sup> The Syrian government responded to Perón’s pro-Arab votes by honoring him with the Syrian Order of the Umayya, making him the first non-Arab to receive the honor.<sup>508</sup>

<sup>504</sup> Faysal K. Noufour quoted in Morton Rosenthal, “Economics: The New Arab Weapon,” ADL, June 1973.

<sup>505</sup> Memorandum from Anti-Defamation League, Morton M. Rosenthal to Latin American Affairs Committee, “Latin American Developments,” June 13, 1974 (hereafter MMR).

<sup>506</sup> United Nations General Assembly, “Invitation to the Palestinian Liberation Organization,” Resolution, October 14, 1974. Available at <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/29/ares29.htm>. accessed May 15, 2015;

<sup>507</sup> Edward S. Milkenky, *Argentina’s Foreign Policies* (Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado, 1978), 161-162.

<sup>508</sup> Edy Kaufman, Yoram Shapira, and Joel Barromi, eds., *Israel-Latin American Relations* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1979), 16-17.



Argentina's reorientation towards the Arab World helped to weaken Israel's position, which had historically depended on the support of major Latin American nations. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) credited the Arab League's political offensive with swaying Argentina to the Palestinian cause. The ADL reported that before the crucial U.N. votes, Lebanese Foreign Minister, Fouad Naffah, had traveled extensively through Latin America to gain support for the Arab position on Palestine. His success was evident as Argentina stood with nine other Latin American countries that voted in favor of the PLO's entrance into the U.N. General Assembly.<sup>509</sup>

The *quid pro quo* of capital investment for U.N. votes between Argentina and the Arab World worsened Israel's already tenuous situation at the United Nations. The Jewish state found itself the prime target of the Third Worldism and lost support after Perón aligned Argentina with the movement. These developments, Morton Rosenthal surmised, were "tremendous setback[s] for Israel whose difficult situation at the U.N. [had] for so long been made at least somewhat tenable by crucial Latin American support." In short, the cooperation between Argentina and the Arab World furthered undermined Israel's already "weak political position" at the U.N.<sup>510</sup>

The change in direction on an international level struck fear in the hearts of many in the Jewish-Argentine community. Not only had Perón resurrected relationships in the Arab World, he employed local anti-Semitic officials to do so. Peronist and well-known anti-Semitic Beveraggi Allende, played a key role in the Arab World program.<sup>511</sup> Allende, with the alleged financial support of the Arab League, had previously circulated leaflets that accused Zionist-Jews of controlling business and cultural affairs in Argentina. The propaganda claimed that Zionists aimed to "dismember" Argentina, suggesting that Jews would establish a state on the

<sup>509</sup> MMR, Rosenthal to Latin American Affairs Committee, "Latin American Developments," November 13, 1974.

<sup>510</sup> Rosenthal, "Economics: The New Arab Weapon," 7.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

country's soil.<sup>512</sup> Meanwhile, the national government added anti-Semitism to its ranks. The most notorious, Juan Carlos Cornejo Linares, the official who had previously called for investigations into Zionist activity in Argentina, won a national senate seat. Then, in 1974, Linares, along with Senator Juan C. Beni, and Provisional President of the Senate José Antonio Allende all attended a meeting organized by the anti-Semitic wing of the Peronist movement to celebrate Peronists return to government. News reports described a crowd engaged in intense, anti-Semitic rhetoric, which included such chants as "Jews to the gallows."<sup>513</sup> Senator Allende denied ever hearing anti-Semitic chants, calling such speech "barbaric, and contrary to the thoughts of General Perón."<sup>514</sup> Yet, for Argentine-Jews, the open association of government officials with anti-Semitic elements suggested that ethnic strife would continue.

The atmosphere in Argentina also gave new inspiration to Arab forces already entrenched in local Arab-Argentine communities and tied to nationalist organizations. The "intrusion" of the Arab League in Argentine society only increased with the favorable environment.<sup>515</sup> Syrian Ambassador to Argentina, Colonel Jawdat Atassi, grew bolder in his anti-Israel, anti-Semitic rhetoric after Perón came to power. During a speech at the National University of Rosario, Atassi echoed Allende's claim that Jews were plotting to annex parts of Argentina for the purposes of their own state.<sup>516</sup> The head of the Arab League, Yusif Albandak, also used the environment to mastermind an anti-Semitic campaign in Argentina with aims to coordinate activities of both right wing anti-Semitism and anti-Israeli leftists in Argentina within a broader

<sup>512</sup> "Anti-Semitic Campaign Stepped Up," *JTA Daily News Bulletin*, January 26, 1972.

<sup>513</sup> MMR, "Latin American Developments," November 13, 1974.

<sup>514</sup> José Antonio Allende quoted in *Ibid.*

<sup>515</sup> Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New-Anti-Semitism* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974), 277.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

movement of anti-Zionism.<sup>517</sup> Such cooperation would isolate Argentine-Jews, making them ineffective as a political constituency, and further discredit Israel's reputation in Argentina, one ADL report concluded. In an attempt to avoid the mistakes of Triki, whose activities earned him expulsion, Albandak quietly coordinated local anti-Israeli propaganda with groups, like the Argentine Committee for the Liberation of Palestine. Despite his covertness, Albandak attracted attention. The aforementioned ADL report claimed that Argentina had become the Latin American base for Arab terrorist organizations, namely the PLO. According to ADL representative Morton Rosenthal, the PLO's increased presence in Argentina during this period came as no surprise since Albandak was the former PLO representative in Chile.<sup>518</sup>

In other cases, the coordination between Arab representatives and anti-Semitic circles in Argentina was an open secret. Representatives from *Tacuara* reportedly attended a banquet commemorating the Egyptian national revolution hosted by the *Sociedad Sirio Lebanesa* in Córdoba province in 1971. Reports claimed that anti-Semitic dialogue dominated the conference, as attendees took turns expressing disdain for Israel and its supposed Zionist intentions in Argentina. By 1974, some Argentine government officials felt comfortable to use derogatory language towards Israel and the local Argentine-Jewish communities. During a televised meeting at the presidential palace, López Rega, the Argentine Minister of Social Welfare, called the presence of Jews in government "prejudicial to Argentine interests."<sup>519</sup> Feeling emboldened after a diplomatic foray to Libya in February 1974, Rega concluded that Libyans had a false impression of Argentina's position towards the Arab World, which was

<sup>517</sup> Morton M. Rosenthal, "Albandak's New Mission," *ADL Bulletin*, 29, No. 4 (1972).

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>519</sup> López Rega quoted in MMR, Rosenthal to Latin American Affairs Committee, "Latin American Developments," March 15, 1974.

“aggravated by religious factors linked to the presence of Jews in the Argentine government.”<sup>520</sup>

The comments earned a stern rebuke from prominent Argentine-Jews who called the incendiary comments an attempt to insert Middle East politics into Argentina and create artificial divisions in the community.<sup>521</sup> Despite Rega’s anti-Semitic posturing, his Libyan counterparts refused to receive Argentine-Jew and Argentine Economic Minister, José Gelbard, in June 1974.<sup>522</sup> Well-publicized attacks continued when Miquel Cosma, a correspondent for the Arab newspaper *Mundo Árabe* and president of the Arab-Latin American institute, claimed that Jews planned to erect a second Jewish state in Argentina during a popular news broadcast. As the program beamed into homes throughout Buenos Aires, Cosma claimed that Jews sought to “maintain their domination of all humanity.”<sup>523</sup> The Arab-Israeli issue had come full circle in Argentina. Perón had allowed the introduction of ethnic strife and political division connected to Middle East issues and, by the time of his death, those seeds had grown to maturity. Argentina had now become the Latin American front in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

## Conclusion

Juan Perón died in July 1974 before he could finish his third term. His second wife and successor, Isabel Perón, would go on to quell temporarily the polarizing environment in Argentina. But despite her best efforts, Argentina had become a flashpoint for the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The country also became the focal point of the Cold War as violent political oppression gripped the country during the Dirty War.

<sup>520</sup> López Rega quoted in Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

<sup>522</sup> MMR, Morton M. Rosenthal to Latin American Affairs Committee, “Latin American Developments,” June 13, 1974.

<sup>523</sup> Miquel Cosma quoted in MMR, “Latin American Developments,” March 15, 1974, 2.

The course of history that began with Perón could not be reversed. The capture of Nazi fugitive Adolf Eichmann spotlighted the presence of foreign influences working in Argentina to build support for the Arab and Israeli causes. The capture itself aroused an unprecedented anti-Semitic fervor in Argentina and helped nationalist groups regain their popularity among the public. The resurgence coincided with the growing presence of the Arab League, which quickly turned into a marriage of convenience between nationalists and Arab officials. The companionship served as the primary means of isolating the Jewish community and challenging Israel's international legitimacy. Over time and with the onset of the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, this cooperation incited new levels of anti-Semitic activity in Argentina. Meanwhile, Israel's reputation sunk to new lows among the Argentine public. Perón's return to power emboldened the Arab World already succeeding in its collaboration with Argentine nationalists and its effective international political campaign against Israel. Perón finished what he started by aligning with the Third World and rebuilding relations in the Arab World. For years the Arab-Israeli conflict in Argentina had occurred somewhere beyond the scope of government or at least without its interference. Perón, however, now engaged his second administration in the debate, fueled ethnic strife through polarizing policies, and sided with the Arab cause without reservation. The quest for a middle ground had ended. Perón moved to ensure that Argentina chose sides in a conflict that gripped his country. He replaced the image of neutrality with one of stark alignment. Argentina and the Arab World. Argentina was both at home and abroad a key component in the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

## Conclusion

During the early morning hours of January 18, 2015, authorities found Argentine prosecutor Alberto Nisman dead in his Buenos Aires apartment from apparent gunshot wound to the head. His death occurred just hours before he was scheduled to present evidence to parliament on matters of corruption involving high-level officials in the Argentine government, including President Cristina Kirchner. Initially thought to be suicide, ongoing investigations now suggest foul play.<sup>524</sup> The timing and suspicious circumstances surrounding Nisman's death shocked Argentine society. According to news accounts, Nisman had evidence confirming Iran's link to the 1994 bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association (AMIA), which leveled a seven story building, killing 85 people and injuring hundreds. More importantly, he also had additional evidence that "Kirchner and several of her governmental colleagues [had] whitewash[ed] Iranian involvement, in order to secure much-needed oil deliveries."<sup>525</sup> The Argentine government had expelled Iranian diplomats in May 1998 after claiming to have evidence of Iran's culpability.<sup>526</sup> Then, on March 9, 2003, Argentine judge Juan Jose Galeano indicted four Iranian officials, including the former Iranian cultural attaché in Buenos Aires, Ali Rabbani, in connection with the attack. Others have since pointed to Argentine support. One

<sup>524</sup> Many former and current Argentine government officials initially claimed the evidence suggested suicide, see Jonathan Gilbert and Simon Romero, "Puzzling Death of a Prosecutor Grips Argentina," *New York Times*, January 19, 2015; "Who Killed Alberto Nisman," *British Broadcast Channel*, May 28, 2015.

<sup>525</sup> Harriet Alexander, "Argentine prosecutor who accused Cristina Kirchner over 1994 bombing found dead," *Telegraph*, January 19, 2015.

<sup>526</sup> Sebastian Rotella, "Argentine Probe Frays Iran Ties," *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 1998.

report from Institute for the Contemporary Study of Anti-Semitism and Racism in Tel Aviv went as far as to argue “that although the bombing was carried out by Muslim militants, they were aided by local police, who provided them with the necessary intelligence, vehicles, explosives and immigration documentation.”<sup>527</sup> Nisman’s case was the latest attempt to address the terrorist attack and explain why the Argentine government had failed to arrest anyone in connection with the bombing.

The AMIA attack was not the first against Argentine-Jews in Buenos Aires that decade. On March 17, 1992, a car bomb detonated outside the Israeli embassy in Argentina’s capital, killing 28 people and injuring 220. This was the deadliest attack in Argentine history until the AMIA bombing two years later. Although Iran remains the primary suspect, no one has been held criminally responsible for this attack either.<sup>528</sup> Iran remains a presence in Argentina. U.S. counter-terrorism experts claim that Hezbollah and other Middle Eastern terrorist organization operate freely in the tri-border area of northern Argentina. The pocket of poorly governed land encompasses portions of Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay, and offers the seclusion necessary for illicit activities.<sup>529</sup> The presence of Iran and these attacks against Jewish centers illustrate how the Arab-Israeli conflict continues to play out in Argentina with shocking levels of intensity. Terrorism, however, remains only a small element in the broader policies connecting Argentina and the Middle East.

The South American country maintains its image of international autonomy, one resistant to U.S. dictates and intimately tied to the developing world. This position has waxed and waned in intensity since Juan Perón’s last administration in the early 1970s. Yet, this fiercely

<sup>527</sup> Quoted in Phyllis Chesler, *The New Anti-Semitism: The Current Crisis and What We Must Do About It* (San Francisco: Jossey-Pass, Inc., 2005) 58-59.

<sup>528</sup> Chesler, *The New Anti-Semitism*, 58.

<sup>529</sup> Andrea Machain, “Frontier in terror spotlight,” *British Broadcasting Corporation*, September 10, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2248487.stm>. (accessed June 28, 2015).

independent attitude continues to inform present-day Argentine politics. This quality partly explains Argentina's outreach with the Arab World persists. The latest and perhaps the most telling instance came in December 2010 when Argentina unilaterally recognized the state of Palestine. Argentina Foreign Minister claimed the time had come to extend recognition to Palestine since the peace process had stalled. Argentina felt Palestinians had waited long enough for its independence and believed extending recognition would speed up the process. Argentina was the second Latin American country to do so that month. The unmistakable sign of support for the Palestinian cause, although symbolic, contributed a helping hand to Arab-Palestinians' goal of statehood. As one report says, "if enough UN members step forward and unilaterally recognize an independent Palestinian state...Israel's position in East Jerusalem and the West Bank...would become less tenable...[and would make] it less likely that the Palestinians [would] compromise on the contours of an eventual state."<sup>530</sup> President Kircher, a self-declared *Peronista*, called on the international community to follow suit. The decision serves an illustration of Argentina's continued interest in Middle East politics and its political inclinations towards the Arab World. The roots of these policies originated with Juan Perón.

A variety of materials scattered across several archives in Argentina and United States underscores Perón's intent of creating a permanent link between his country and the Arab World during his first administration in the 1940s. One could argue that linkages already existed in the form of Arab League-Argentine diplomacy and the immigration of Arabs and Jews to Argentina during the early twentieth-century. Indeed, Argentina had connections with the Middle East long before Perón came to power. These truths, however, are complimentary to the narrative. The

<sup>530</sup> Sara Miller Llana, "Argentina latest in Latin America to recognize Palestinian State," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 7, 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/2010/1207/Argentina-latest-in-Latin-America-to-recognize-Palestinian-state>. (accessed on June 28, 2015).



Argentine government had very little interest in the region prior to Perón. Middle East politics, culture, and economy remained a cursory topic within government circles until the new president immediately dispatched envoys to the region. My research shows that Perón's sudden and unprecedented diplomatic strategy inspired by his third position policy laid the foundation for decades of Argentine-Arab World relations. This abrupt transformation in the area of Middle East relations remains the essential factor in Argentine-Arab World relations during the Cold War. More importantly, the change explains how the Arab-Israeli conflict manifested itself in Argentina. In fact, the evidence shows that the unprecedented transition from disinterest to accelerated diplomacy initially hinged on the Palestine dilemma.

Scholars have long overlooked or underplayed the significance of Argentina's vote during the momentous partition of Palestine. The foremost scholar on Argentine-Middle East relations, Ignacio Klich, believed the abstention helped neither Jews nor Arabs. Klich's position is likely shared among other historians. The argument understands abstention as a common pattern in Argentina's voting record and recognizes the vote as a simple refusal to endorse a position. This logical conclusion has dissuaded further historical analysis. Yet, in light of a broader context of diplomacy and government opinions, the vote takes on new significance.

As Chapter one shows, the Palestine dilemma took on urgency at the United Nations around the same period that Perón announced his third position strategy. The deployment of an Arab-Argentine diplomat to the Middle East immediately after Perón's election victory in 1946 and the subsequent recognition of multiple Arab countries confirmed his intent. Separately, public statements at the United Nations and private opinions of government officials indicated that Argentina held certain affinities for the Arab World. Even Zionists had ceded Argentina to

the Arabs in the lead up to the vote. With these circumstances in mind, an in-depth analysis reveals that abstention served to support for the Arab cause. The Zionist position required affirmative votes for its goals to succeed, whereas the Arab cause could succeed with either abstentions, “no” votes, or a combination of the two. As the evidence demonstrates, the vote enhanced relations between Argentina and the Arab World. Arabs in Argentina celebrated the vote, and Arab governments cheered Juan Perón decades later. Reactions only confirm the contention that abstaining helped the Arab World. And the vote was merely a prologue.

The Argentine leader aggressively pursued countries like Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia during the late 1940s as Chapter Two demonstrates. His particular approach also revealed the true intent behind his third position policy. The case of Saudi Arabia remains one of the most compelling. Popular on the international stage, the Hashemite Kingdom proved to be a safe diplomatic relationship for the Perón administration, which is likely why Argentina became the first Latin American country to recognize the country. Argentina also benefited from friendly oil contracts, whose deficits Saudi Arabia excused for unknown reasons. However, Argentine diplomatic records clearly indicate that Saudi Arabia served more as a listening post for Cold War intelligence and a way to solidify its regional *bone fides*, than a genuine third position partner. Saudi Arabia’s commitment to First World powers practically eliminated it as a prospective, non-aligned collaborator. Yet, the Arab nation earned a good reputation among Arab countries, which worked to Perón’s advantage. Perón’s casual commitment to Saudi Arabia reflected his desire for balancing Cold War realities with building a partnership among less conservative Arab states. The story of Jordan serves as another window into Perón’s strategies.

During the height of Perón's third position politicking in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Jordan remained a glaring omission from Argentina's Arab World agenda. Jordan repeatedly tried and failed to establish relations with Argentina primarily due to its unpopularity among the Arab World. My research shows that Jordan, the so-called Black Sheep of the Arab League, proved too risky an investment for Argentina. Jordan's First World relationships helped dissuade Perón from extending recognition, but we know from Saudi Arabia that connections with Western governments did not dissuade Perón. Rather, Perón wanted the support of reformist Arab states, those less inclined to the First World. By repeatedly refusing Jordan's request, Perón announced that his loyalties to Jordan's reformist rivals, namely Egypt and Syria.

The Argentine president prized those Arab states with political tendencies towards centralized and which held anti-imperial sentiments. Egypt topped the list. Argentina keeping diplomats in place and even allowing for a naval visit in August 1948 to continue during the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict underscored Perón's dedication to reformist states. The dialogue between the Perón administration and the Egyptian government up until the overthrow of King Farouk was one of admiration and support. And although Perón publically claimed neutrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the interaction with Egypt remained intense. The same went for Syria. Argentina worked tirelessly in Syria to add another partner to its third position agenda. Suspicious of the First World and hostile towards Jordan, Syria possessed the political makeup that Perón coveted. Much like Egypt, this work went on despite the Arab-Israeli conflict and the constant threats from political instability. The pursuit of Syria and Egypt, nominal relations with Saudi Arabia and the exclusion of Jordan together provided a clear indication of Perón's intentions.

Chapter Three recalls how this short-lived plan fell apart. Records indicate that Perón retreated from his agenda in the early 1950s, as chaos enveloped the Middle East and financial hardships undermined Argentina sovereignty. Although Perón tried at times to resurrect his non-aligned agenda, his increased economic reliance on the United States and weakening political power forced a permanent change in strategy. Argentina's recognition of Jordan in 1954 and a deepening relationship with Israel underscored this change. Revising the third position agenda, however, could not undo its domestic consequences. This project demonstrates how Perón invited Middle East politics into Argentina through his ambitious diplomatic project. A propaganda war between Israelis and Arab forces ensued, worsening after Perón's overthrow. My research adds an additional layer to the well-treaded work on the history of the Perón era. Whereas most scholarship addresses political reform and economic nationalization, I argue that foreign policies in the Middle East carried with them enormous consequences for Argentina during the Cold War. A shift in attention to foreign policy in the well-documented history of Perón's legacy reveals a largely unexplored set of domestic and international consequences.

Chapters Four and Five retrace the consequences of the Arab-Israeli in Argentina. The impact affected large immigrant communities, non-alignment ideologues, and anti-Semitic nationalists differently, while leading to societal turmoil. In fact, the Palestine dilemma became more pronounced in Argentina with advent of the Suez Crisis and as nationalists joined forces with the Arab lobby. The most telling instance of Perón's Middle East legacy came during the Aramburu administration when foreign forces tied to the Suez Crisis directly engaged their constituencies in Argentina. Scholar Raanan Rein writes that the Arab League in Buenos Aires "made the most of this atmosphere of disapproval [towards Israel]."<sup>531</sup> Meanwhile, the Israeli government aggressively solicited support from Jewish diasporic communities. Research shows

<sup>531</sup> Rein, *Israel, Argentina, and the Jews*, 152.

that both parties seemed content to bypass the Argentine government in favor of direct communication with their respective immigrant groups. This attitude underscored the infiltration of foreign political power in Argentina and demonstrated how important the conflict had become.

Indeed, the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict impacted Argentina arguably more than any other country in Latin America. Its influence became all the more clear with the resurgence of nationalism and anti-Semitism as hostilities grew more intense. In fact, the influence of Middle East interests in Argentina acted as a ripple effect that gradually touched different, unrelated facets of society and politics. The themes of imperialism, nonalignment, and revolution inspired competing factions to confrontation during the late 1950s, fueling ethnic strife in Argentina. After the Suez Crisis, Third World countries felt compelled more than ever to realize their cooperative dreams. As a result, the First World found facing a legitimate counterweight to its power. Palestine became a rallying cry for the Third World, but as a concept more so than a place. Many revolutionaries, leftists, and proponents of nonalignment began to treat Palestine as a code or idiom for imperial occupation and state oppression. The Arab-Palestinian cause became a symbol of revolution, more so than a regional conflict. These vague, yet powerful notions of victimization exacerbated the conflict in Argentina.

Chapter Five uses three different events to demonstrate how the Argentina had become the Latin American front in the Arab-Israeli conflict by the late 1960s and early 1970s. Israel executed the Eichmann capture just as anti-Zionist forces gathered strength globally. Moreover, nationalist organizations in Argentina had found renewed strength and new partnerships with the Arab League. As a result, the Eichmann capture ignited a period of ethnic strife not seen in Argentina since the early twentieth century. The operation sparked anti-Semitic attacks across

the country and left the diplomatic relationship in disrepair. The Israeli action also inspired waves of anti-Zionist propaganda that grew more intense over the following years. More broadly, Perón's unrelated policies – harboring Nazis, building relations with Israel, and the Arab World -- once again impacted Argentina long after his reign had ended. The 1967 Arab-Israeli War and Onganía's failed policies further complicated the country's international position. President Onganía serves as an illustration of how balancing alignments with the United States and with the Third World was not longer feasible. In an oversimplified summation, countries were either leaning towards revolutionaries or aligning closer to the First World. The polarized international landscape no longer afforded space for fluid political positions, preventing Onganía earning simultaneous approval from his U.S. allies and those in the developing world. He still tried. He refused to adopt the U.S. resolution in the 1967 war in hopes of maintaining Argentina's image of international autonomy, but sought U.S. approval by smashing Communist groups. Onganía also expressed support for the PLO as a symbol of support for the Third World even while the organization lent support to Perónist rebels trying to overthrow Onganía. He also failed to acknowledge the influence of Middle East politics in Argentina and dismissed evidence pointing to the steady rise of anti-Semitism. The conflict, its ideas, and its actors operated with little fear of government intervention, save the Peronist guerillas. Both policies contributed to his downfall.

Onganía's increasingly dictatorial policies and failed attempts at balancing First and Third World alliances paved the way for the return of Juan Perón. As Chapter Five details, Perón quickly recognized the polarizing international environment and avoided stale methods of political balance. Perón made clear through trade, diplomacy, and government proclamations that his third administration would be dedicated to promoting Arab interests both domestically

and internationally. Perón's overt inclinations towards the Arab World during 1970s seem to confirm the circumstantial evidence from the 1940s that pointed to his affinity for Arab countries. The Arab League found renewed energy in this helpful environment. The organization, along with an increasing influential PLO, embarked on a propaganda campaign that further undermined Israel's already weakening reputation. Arab interests appeared to be winning the hearts and minds of Argentines just as Perón passed away. In his wake he left Argentina in the grips of its own Arab-Israeli conflict, which continues with varying levels of intensity to this day.

The scholarship on Latin American Cold War history needed fresh, new narratives that move beyond the traditional approach of Marxist insurgencies, U.S. military aid, and civil war by integrating perspectives from outside the Western Hemisphere. This project acts as a Cold War reevaluation advancing an invigorating, new examination that focuses on Argentine-Arab World relations amid influences of Arab nationalism, Third Worldism, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. These relations exemplify the global variables that truly shaped the Cold War. The work also adds a layer of complexity to history of Argentina's Cold War history, demonstrating that the conflict was not simply a battle between right and left. My project shows how the Argentine-Arab World relationship of 1940s and the subsequent domestic consequences created a different conflict in Argentina. The dissertation compliments Raanan Rein's *Argentina, Israel and the Jews*, and other publications on the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict, such as Damian Fernandez's *Central America and the Middle East: The Internationalization of the Crises*.

Although the dissertation incorporates and potentially contributes to multiple fields of study, the narrative itself is narrow and not comprehensive. For example, Chapter One briefly addressed the history of Jewish and Arab immigration to Argentina, but only for contextual purposes. The summation served to show the large presence of Middle Eastern immigrants in Argentina, rather than provide a detailed explanation of Arab or Jewish identity, religious association, or communal formation into Argentina. Others such as, María del Mar Logrono Narbona, Andrew Arsan, and Christina Civantos have completed extensive work on these issues and remain the premier people for those seeking information on the social and religious interaction between Latin America and the Middle East.<sup>532</sup> I also did my best to succinctly represent modern Middle East history, accounting for all its complexities and characteristics within a limited scope. The background served as illustration for the complicated nature of inter-Arab politics rather than a decisive picture covering the major arguments within the field of Middle East historiography. Nevertheless, more work needs to be completed in order to fully comprehend the domestic and international impact of Argentina's relationships with Middle East nations.

There is no comprehensive roadmap for locating relevant evidence for this topic since only a handful of scholars have addressed Argentina's Middle East foreign policy or the influence of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Argentina. Based on limited finances, I identified and used what I considered to be the best available material for discerning and deciphering the Argentine government's rather cryptic intent behind its policies with the Arab World throughout the Cold War. The information within Argentine archives and U.S. holdings presented a great starting point. Yet, this project would benefit greatly from more material that explicitly explains the Argentine government's position on Palestine and whether its support for the Arab World

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involved other activity, like weapons transfer or economic support. The main Argentine resource, the *Archivo del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto* in Buenos Aires, does have information on Argentina's international activity which may yield helpful information.

Unfortunately, those materials are generically titled and scattered throughout other sections, under such titles as "international organizations." In my experience, some of those sections that appear innocuous actually held quality information. Future researchers will need to keep this in mind and plan for an extended period of time in order to properly sift through the mass of somewhat disorganized collections.

Additional data on trade between Argentina and the Arab World throughout the Cold War, along with crucial diplomatic materials from Arab countries, such as Egypt and Jordan, would also add enormous depth to the narrative. On that note, the limited use of Arabic-language sources through this project remains perhaps its most glaring drawback. I relied mostly on primary materials from the United States and Argentina to reconstruct the Arab perspective, and vetted those sources to ensure the information's plausibility. Nevertheless, subsequent revisions would benefit greatly from government documents or newspapers from the Arab World. For example, the basis for my arguments on the influence of the Arab-Israeli conflict in Argentina during the 1960s and 1970s in Chapters Four and Five relies heavily on U.S. government records, along with Argentine and American Jewish organizations. This approach presents obvious weaknesses. Although each section offered original work, the lack of Arab perspective left it somewhat incomplete. Unfortunately, many difficulties arose while trying to access the Arab perspective.

Finances and security issues curtailed travel options. Egypt and Syria, two of the most important partnerships for Perón, were unsafe for foreign travelers during the times I had

available. In the case of Egypt, I chose instead to use my local contacts to retrieve material. The process proved cumbersome and ultimately unsuccessful. Arab League officials at the archives in Cairo granted my contacts limited access, but made clear that researchers could not take notes, photos, or photocopies of the material. In short, those restrictions prevented me from obtaining any material. Meanwhile, those Arabic-language archives in the United States, relevant to my project and which fit within my financial constraints, yielded very little information. The University of Texas at Austin's Arabic newspaper depository, for example, possesses a wealth of Arabic-language newspapers from throughout the Arab World. However, the archive simply had very little related to my time period or Arab nations' interaction with Argentina. The Arab perspective definitely demands more attention. With all these drawbacks, the project still presents a convincing argument for an unprecedented Third World alliance that ended with Argentina becoming the Latin American front in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Argentina's international reach, political magnetism, and ethnic diversity came together to create one of the most fascinating stories of South-to-South relations during the Cold War. The once marginalized Argentine-Arab community found a new voice in the wake of Perón's unprecedented diplomatic policies with the Arab World and his decision to affirm the Arab position in the Palestine debate. In turn, Arab and Jewish interest groups flooded the country and embedded themselves in Argentina society. As the Palestine concept came to represent global revolutionary movements and inspire Third World leaders, Argentina became a place for conflict. Middle East politics infiltrated the South American country in a perfect storm of foreign political influence, resurrection of the nationalist movement, and political instability. The story climaxed with the return of Perón and his unabashed support for the Arab World. In the end, the internationalized conflict found a permanent home in Argentina.

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REMAPPING THE COLD WAR: ARGENTINE-ARAB WORLD TRANSNATIONALISM,  
1946-1973

by David Alan Grantham, Ph.D., 2015  
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This project is part of a Cold War reevaluation that advances an invigorating, new examination of Argentine-Arab relations amid influences of Arab nationalism, Third World movement, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. These relations exemplify the global variables that truly shaped the Cold War. My work examines how the non-aligned tendencies of Argentina attracted reformist Arab states and sparked an unprecedented form of transnational exchange amid the internationalization of the Arab-Israeli conflict and tense Cold War alliances. The unparalleled exchange saw Argentina become one of the few Latin American nations to affirm the Arab position in the U.N. partition debates and the first to establish relations with newly emerging Arab states. The subsequent Cold War atmosphere, however, forced Argentina to reconcile its remarkable relationship with the Arab World and the demands of its large Arab community with its continued policies of noninterference in issues related to the Israel-Palestine conflicts. Despite those claims, however, the Arab-Israeli conflict manifested itself in Argentina and unprecedented ethnic strife ensued. In short, Argentina became the Latin American front in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

