What do Argentines think about Brazil as an emerging global power? Results from an experimental survey

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Abstract: There is a longstanding debate in Political Science on the coherence and consistency of public opinion in relation to Foreign Policy. This paper contributes to this discussion and makes a methodological contribution by comparing the results obtained from two different student samples in a non-developed country–namely, Argentina. Through an experimental survey applied at the Universidad de Buenos Aires and at the Universidad Nacional de Avellaneda, we find that when stimulated with new information about Brazilian economic growth and military spending compared to Argentina, a) less informed, and b) more nationalist people changed their preferences regarding Foreign Policy. In addition, we found a cleavage related to the support, or lack thereof, of Kirchnerismo. However, the effects vary considerably between samples. While students from the most prestigious Argentine University maintain stable preferences, students from a new and peripheral university change their opinions when stimulated with new information about Brazilian power.

Keywords: Public Opinion; Foreign Policy; Survey Experiment; Student Sampling.

Number of words: 7450
INTRODUCTION

The influence of civil society on the formation of Foreign Policy is growing and, consequently, theorists and policymakers are becoming increasingly concerned with the degree of coherence and consistency that the public show on this subject. There is an enduring debate within the literature between two main theoretical perspectives: a) those who believe that public opinion on issues of Foreign Policy is structured (Page & Shapiro, 1988; Wittkopf, 1990); b) others that think that, due to either lack of interest or time, the public are volatile regarding this specific subject (Lippmann, 1932; Almond, 1970).

We applied an experimental survey in Argentina to two dissimilar samples of students in attempts to gather new empirical evidence regarding this debate. The objective of our research was to observe whether new information on the growth and military spending in Brazil—the main ally and axis of Argentinean Foreign Policy—changed the preferences of respondents about Foreign Policy.

First, we find that among students from the Universidad de Buenos Aires (UBA), the oldest and most prestigious institution in the country, survey responses showed no sensitivity to the treatment. With the exception of those who think that Argentina has an important role on the international stage and those who said that they usually read about international affairs less than once a week, the preferences of the students of this university remained stable.

However, the same experiment was repeated at the Universidad Nacional de Avellaneda (UNdAv), an institution recently created and with a different population than UBA, and yielded different results. Students who were stimulated with information regarding Brazilian growth and military spending, compared to that of Argentina, changed their preferences about the strategy that the country should take on Foreign Policy. In turn, as in the UBA, the effect was greater among people who give greater importance to Argentina in the world and among those who are not as informed about international affairs. On the other hand, people that considered Argentina important in the international arena also tended to change their opinions when exposed to relative information. Finally, although investigations have shown that using samples of students can be a good proxy for public opinion, we note that not all students behave the same.
Therefore, it is necessary to investigate what type of students we are using to build our samples.

Our paper is structured as follows: We first present a historical evolution of the relationship between Argentina and Brazil and classic public opinion polls that have tried to capture the perception of Argentines in relation to its neighbor. Then, we discuss the theoretical framework regarding the degree of coherence of public opinion on Foreign Policy and the methodology used. We then present the results of our research, first in general terms and then for each sample. Finally, we draw some conclusions.

FROM RIVALRY TO REGIONAL HEGEMONY

Nowadays, Brazil is the most important country in the definition of Argentinian Foreign Policy (Russel & Tokatlian, 2011). However, throughout its history, the two largest South American countries have gone through stages of rivalry and alliance, which only stabilized after 1985 with the meeting of Alfonsín and Sarney in Foz do Iguaçu. Since then, Brazil has become Argentina’s main ally (Scenna, 1975; Selcher, 1985; Hirst, 1987; Bandeira, 1987; Rapoport & Madrid, 2011).

In economic matters, bilateral trade grew exponentially with the creation of Mercosur in 1991. As Figure 1 shows, Argentina enjoyed a trade surplus up until the late 90’s a trend reversed after the deep crisis of 2001, when Brazil started to dominate the economic bilateral relationship. Added to this is the fact that, while 20% of Argentinean exports go to the Brazilian market, Argentina absorbs just 8% of its neighbor’s exports, which also have a higher added value and level of industrialization (Ferrer, 1996; Lavagna & Argentina, 1998; Bernal-Meza, 2008).
On the other hand, analyzing the historical development of both countries using an Index of National Capabilities\(^1\), we can see that the power gap between the two countries has been widening since 1956, at the beginning of Kubitschek government (1956-1961) (Sikkink & Wolfson, 1993).

![Figure 1: Evolution of Bilateral Trade](image1)

Source: United Nations Comtrade

Drawing on the theoretical framework of the Realist school, middle regional countries have two options of Foreign Policy in relation to the hegemonic power: to align or to balance. While the first strategy consists of following the bigger power’s lead, balancing can be performed in two different ways: (a) *externally*, by combining capabilities with those of other countries in their same situation; or (b) *internally*,

\(^1\)Index composed by six indicators: (a) State Population; (b) Urban Population; (c) Production of Iron and Steel; (d) Energy Consumption; (e) Total Military Personnel; (f) Military spending (Singer, Bremer, & Stuckey, 1972)
mobilizing its own resources in order to more effectively resist the hegemonic State (Walt, 2005, p. 120).

Historically Argentina tried to balance against Brazilian power through strategy (b). However, in the mid-80's Brazil reached a clear military superiority. Since that moment, Argentina appeared to have only two options for Foreign Policy towards its neighbor: to align with Brazil in order to achieve greater participation in international affairs, or to align with other countries in the region to counterbalance Brazilian power.

THE IMPACT ON ARGENTINIAN PUBLIC OPINION

What do Argentines think about Brazil as an emerging global power? Within the research that has systematically attempted to capture Argentinian public opinion perceptions about Foreign Policy, we highlight the survey project carried out by the Argentinean Council for International Relations (CARI) “La Opinión Pública Argentina sobre Política Exterior y Defensa”².

In the 2002³, 2006⁴ and 2010⁵ editions, survey respondents were asked with which country Argentina should establish the closest relations. Brazil fluctuates significantly over time (See Figure 3). On the one hand, the perception of the public remained stable, with a peak of positive opinion in 2006 of 18%. On the other, Brazil was always surpassed by other options, in the 2002 and 2006 editions by Europe (24% and 27% respectively) and in the 2010 edition by the United States (47%).

Opinion leaders answered in 2002 and 2006 that Brazil was the second country with which Argentina should establish its closest relations, both times behind the United States. However, this proportion reversed sharply in the 2010 edition, where Brazil became the most popular option with 42%, with China in a distant second place at 18%.

² Together with Latinobarometer—(http://www.latinobarometro.org/), this is the only project that applies systematically traditional surveys in order to measure Argentinean perceptions respect to a large number of international issues.
³ 2408 general people and 192 opinion leaders were interviewed between November 15 and December 15, 2001.
⁴ 1616 general people and 175 opinion leaders were interviewed interviewed between October 23 and October 23, 2006.
⁵ 1606 general people and 170 opinion leaders were interviewed interviewed between November 17 and November 28, 2010.
Although some authors claim that Argentinian public opinion perceptions about Foreign Policy have not changed substantially over recent years (Ava & Merke, 2011), data from three traditional surveys and a descriptive comparison between them are not sufficient information to make this statement conclusively. In order to answer if public opinion has a structured and coherent perception about Foreign Policy, we present the theoretical framework of our work.

**THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: INTERACTION BETWEEN PUBLIC OPINION AND FOREIGN POLICY**

Although some authors claim that public opinion does not exist (Bourdieu, 1979) and that it is nothing more than an “illusion perpetrated by soundings” (Bishop, 2004), we use the classical work of Converse (1962) to argue that public opinion is a configuration of ideas and attitudes in which the elements are bound together by some form of constraint or functional interdependence. Consequently, we assume the existence of a public opinion in the sense of being the product of individual opinions converging with other factors, which can be measured by opinion polls (Arribas, 1987).

In democratic regimes, public opinion has a specific weight in Public Policy formulation, either as a reference prior to the formation of policies, or in the process of accountability and legitimacy that rulers are constantly subject to. Although Foreign Policy cannot be considered a traditional Public Policy (Lentner, 2006) the perception of public opinion on this subject has become a concern of academics and policymakers (Pimenta de Faria, 2008) repeatedly turning up on the electoral agenda (Holsti, 1992).
As the processes of economic liberalization and global governance are increasingly including civil society in discussions on international policy issues, it becomes even more necessary to study how public opinion is structured regarding to this kind of issue (Holsti, 2009). As such, it should be noted that within the literature there is an old debate about the degree of coherence that the public has in relation to Foreign Policy.

Some authors suggest that the level of interest that most of the population have on this issue is very low (Mueller, 2002). The average citizen does not possess enough time to devote themselves to politics in general, much less to external issues (Lippmann, 1932), which would explain the absence of a coherent set of perceptions on Foreign Policy (Almond, 1970). Therefore, given the absence of consistent and stable representations on this matter for society in general (Sousa, 2009), it would be pointless to study what the public believes about these issues, particularly because public opinion has little influence in the formation of Foreign Policy (Jacobs & Page, 2005).

From another perspective, it is argued that the public hold consistent attitudes toward Foreign Policy and sensitive issues, such as tolerance to casualties in military operations, which can affect election results (Aldrich et al., 2006, p. 478) and constrain policy choices in critical moments (Foyle, 2004).

Several authors have tried to demonstrate, using traditional quantitative studies, the existence of stability and consistency in public attitudes about Foreign Policy. For example, through a time-series approach and based on 6000 responses from 425 questions applied between 1935-1982 regarding Foreign Policy, Shapiro & Page (1988) and Page & Shapiro (1992) found that 51% of responses did not vary over time\(^6\) and from the remaining 49%, 22% did by less than 10%, always preceded by sudden changes in the international arena. Through a temporal analysis of surveys applied in the United States during the 70s, Wittkopf (1990) concluded that there is stability and consistency in public attitudes regarding a critical issue in the United States’ Foreign Policy, as is the dichotomy between two opposite alternatives of international insertion: internationalism or isolationism. Finally, Isernia et al. (2002) analyze the evolution of German, French and Italian public opinions between 1954 and 1990 and compare them with Americans—by far the most widely studied—on issues of Foreign Policy, showing the former are slightly more volatile than the latter.

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\(^6\) Variation of less than 6%
However, while the classic quantitative studies excel in the area, new methodological approaches have gained ground in recent years. Deliberative polls\(^7\) were conducted face-to-face and online during January 2003 to analyze how preferences are affected if American citizens had been previously discussing external affairs (Luskin et al., 2006). The results of this research show that people who discussed this kind of subject varied significantly in their preferences. Both, those for who did it online as well as those who discussed face-to-face, showed different responses than people who were not exposed to any discussion. This led the authors to conclude that there is a strong deliberative effect for Foreign Policy issues (Luskin et al., 2006, p.18).

On the other hand, the most used methodology in recent times to assess the degree of consistency of public opinion on Foreign Policy issues has been experimental surveys because they can isolate the observable variable from unobservable effects. Experimental surveys on war and the impact of deaths in battle (Gartner, 2008) have shown that when combat losses are presented in relative terms in relation to enemy casualties, the negative effect of the latter information is enlivened and support towards war increases (Boettcher & Cobb, 2006, p. 849).

Recently, other framing effects related to this topic were tested but with different results. Americans are concerned not only about the proportion of casualties but also by their distribution across social groups (Kriner & Shen, 2013) and these casualties are more tolerated if people believe in a future victory (Gelpi et al., 2009). Therefore, we can say that the effects of framing are not homogeneous and may be influenced by both individual and situational factors (Boettcher & Cobb, 2009, p. 692).

From this review of the literature we can conclude that: (a) the question of the degree of coherence of public opinion about Foreign Policy issues remains open; (b) there are studies that have addressed specific issues of Foreign Policy, but few of them have inquired about countries’ international insertion; (c) most—if not all—of the existing literature has focused on public opinion from developed countries, mainly the United States.

This work attempts to contribute to the aforementioned research agenda by providing evidence of how public opinion from a developing country, Argentina, reacts

\(^7\) Surveys where small groups of people are brought together to discuss certain topics and afterwards their responses are compared before and after the debate and with the group who was not exposed to these activities. For more information see Fishkin (1988)
to information regarding the growth and military spending from its main ally, Brazil. Our objective is to see if these stimuli cause the respondents' answers to vary, which would show that public opinion is sensitive to new information on Foreign Policy and therefore that perceptions about this issue are not structured.

**Methodological Design**

The use of experimental methodology has boomed in the area of Social Sciences and recently in the International Relations field (Hyde, 2010). In this sense, although there is a significant history of experimental work in Political Science (Morton & Williams, 2010), the discipline as a whole saw the rebirth of this methodology in recent years, now becoming a widely accepted and influential approach (Druckman et al., 2006, p. 634).

Our data come from a survey applied at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), between April 7 and April 11, 2014\(^8\), to a convenience sample of 893 students from the Law School (33.52%) and the school of Social Sciences (66.48%)\(^9\). The choice of this sample is justified by the fact that, despite some limitations (Dasgupta and Hunsinger, 2008), students have demonstrated that they behave in the same way as the general population (Druckman and Kam, 2009). Moreover, given the convenience of recruiting student participants, this type of sample often provides an efficient way to test initial hypotheses before attempting to generalize one’s theory to broader samples (Dasgupta & Hunsinger, 2008, p. 94).

To gain in terms of external validity and contribute to a methodological discussion, we decided to replicate our experiment at the University of Avellaneda (UNdAv) on a sample of 624 students, whose areas of study were the following: Nursery (17.32%), Engineering (30.56%), Environmental Studies (12.58%), Physical Education (11.93%), Arts (3.27%), Journalism (16.18%) and Social Sciences (8.17%) between May 26 and May 30, 2014\(^10\). While UBA is the oldest and most prestigious Argentinian University, UNdAv has been recently created and most of its students are first-generation students. We consider that comparing the results between two different

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\(^8\) A pilot test was applied in early December 2013 to ensure that the questions were clear for all participants. 100 students answered the questionnaire and the question that tried to capture the political affinity in relation to the actual government had to be modified, since in its original format generated rejection by more than 10% of respondents.

\(^9\) We applied 900 surveys but 7 of them rejected to participate in the experiment and were excluded from the sample.

\(^10\) We applied 630 surveys but 6 of them rejected to participate and we excluded from the sample.
universities can result in an interesting methodological contribution, as authors have compared the results obtained from samples of students in relation to the general public but still no-one has questioned what kind of students are making up these samples.

In both cases, with help of the academic staff of the two universities, we first entered into contact with the professors of Law and Social Sciences from UBA and from all the courses from UNdAv. After their approval, we arranged a time in which we could interrupt their lessons and apply the experiment but without letting the participants know in advance. Students were only informed that they were part of a public opinion pool and as stimulus for being part of the research we offered a $1,000 voucher prize in books. As suggested by McDermott (2014) the participants’ information was collected on a different piece of paper in order to maintain anonymity.

After answering five general questions on Argentina and its relevance on the international arena, participants were randomly assigned to one of two experimental treatments, or to a control group. The two treatments\textsuperscript{11} gave real information regarding the growth of the Brazilian GDP in the last ten years, and the amount of money spent by Brasilia on the military budget. The only difference between them is that one gave information in an absolute way (See Appendix I), while the other compared these figures with Argentina (See Appendix II). As suggested by Boettcher & Cobb (2009, p. 684), one third of our sample did not receive any stimulus, thus remaining in the control group in order to estimate the unique impact of exposure to each type of framing. In order to allocate subjects to treatment and control groups, the following procedure was used: absolute treatment was coded 1, relative treatment coded 2 and control group was coded 0. Then, we randomized this 3 number distribution for 900 cases at UBA and 630 for UNdAv, and mixed the questionnaires according to the randomized distribution.

Immediately after the treatments, respondents were asked which of the following should be the best Foreign Policy strategy for Argentina: (a) align with Brazil, or (b) find new regional partners to counterbalance Brazilian power. Participants also were asked about what they considered were the three most important countries on the international stage, which countries would be the most relevant in the next ten years, if Brazil was a leader in South America, and if Argentina should emulate its behavior.

\textsuperscript{11} Treatments were deployed in class by 3 research assistants whom were supervised by one of the authors. We would like to emphasize that they were controlled so that each person would receive only the treatment for which they had been assigned and, therefore, there were no problems of contagion.
Such questions not only sought to analyze whether the treatment was changing participants’ preferences on Foreign Policy, but also to see if the perception that they had in relation to world affairs changed also.

Finally, socio-economic and political questions pertaining to items such as age, sex, gender, income, how frequently they get informed themselves about foreign affairs, the relevance they give to Argentina in the international arena\textsuperscript{12}, their perception of the current government\textsuperscript{13} and political ideology were made-to asked of participants in order to observe whether the treatments had greater effect among specific groups of people.

**ALIGN WITH A FUTURE GLOBAL POWER?**

In this section, we present the results of the survey applied at UBA and at UNdAv, without considering the effects of treatments and observing whether there are differences between various subgroups of our sample.

As we can see in Table 1, over 80% of UBA respondents and 73.97% of UNdAv students think that Argentina should align with Brazil and not seek new regional partners to counterbalance its neighbor’s power. Although we may consider that stimuli given beforehand could have changed some answers, with these figures we can affirm that there is a broad consensus within Argentinean society regarding this issue.

| TABLE 1: ALIGN OR BALANCE TO THE BRAZILIAN GROWING POWER? |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
|                               | UBA             | UNdAv           |
|                               | Freq. | %    | Freq. | %    |
| Align                         | 693   | 80.12| 449   | 74.09|
| Balance                       | 172   | 19.88| 157   | 25.91|
| **Total**                     | 865   | 100  | 606   | 100  |

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Secondly, nowadays Argentinians believe that there are only two major powers in the world. When asked which are the three most important countries in the international arena (See Table 2), the United States and China appear respectively in 94.4\% and 77\% of the valid responses at UBA and 86.5\% and 65.92\% of the answers at

\textsuperscript{12} Participants had to allocate Argentina a place on a 1-10 scale, 1 being irrelevant in the international arena and 10 very relevant. As in both samples this variable is distributed normally, we codified it as a dummy, dividing the sample in 1,2,3,4,5 as “non-nationalist” and 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 as “nationalist”.

\textsuperscript{13} Participants had to rate Cristina Kirchner’s government on a 1-10 scale, 1 being ‘very bad’ and 10 ‘very good’. As in both samples this variable is normally distributed, we codified it as a dummy, dividing the sample in 1,2,3,4,5 as “non-kirchnerista” and 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 as “kirchnerista”.

12
Meanwhile, appearing in 36.6% of the responses, Russia was the third most selected country at UBA, a result we believe that can be explained due to the proximity of the application of the survey with the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea to the Russian Federation. Meanwhile, only 21% of the participants at this university mentioned Brazil as a current power, standing in fifth place behind Japan (31%) and with the same percentage as England. As a counterpart, UNdAv students chose Brazil as the third most relevant country in the world today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UBA</th>
<th>UNdAv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elaborated by the authors

When asked which will be the three most powerful countries in the following ten years, the answers are more varied in both samples (See Table 3). China maintains almost the same percentage as in Table 2 at UBA (72.5%), but now as the main response, above the United States. In the case of UNdAv, the trend also reverses and China appears with 51.4% and the U.S. with 50.1% of the valid answers. Brazil reaches 50.3% of the preferences at UBA, almost similar to the rate at UNdAv (43.8%) and in both cases becoming the third most selected country.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>UBA</th>
<th>UNdAv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>50.3%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 Crimea was annexed to the Russian Federation on March 18, 2014, two weeks before the survey was applied.
United Kingdom 8.7% 13.1%
Japan 28.7% 29.4%
Russia 28.7% 20.0%
Other 9.6% 11.2%

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Continuing with the questions that attempted to capture the perception of Argentinians regarding international issues, we note that there is a marked consensus among UBA respondents that Brazil is the leader in South America (71.9%). On the other hand UNdAv’s respondents divided into two big groups, those who think that Brazil leads regionally (54.9%) and those who think it does not (45.1%) (See Table 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UBA</th>
<th>UNdAv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil is not a regional leader</td>
<td>247 27.9%</td>
<td>276 45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil is a regional leader</td>
<td>637 71.9%</td>
<td>336 54.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>885 100%</td>
<td>612 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Finally, 44% of UBA respondents and 45.7% of UNdAv students answered that Argentina should take Brazil as an example, although the variation of responses among different subgroups for this question was considerable. Within the UBA sample, those people who have a negative view of the Kirchner’s government were more than 13 percentage points more likely to take the view that Argentina should follow the example of Brazil compared to those that are Kirchneristas. Moreover, considering the UNdAv sample we can also see that the difference between Kirchneristas and Non-Kirchneristas regarding Argentina taking Brazil as an example is of 15 percentage points (See Figure 4). This is probably one of the most important findings of this part of the research, as it confirms Russel and Tokatlian’s hypothesis that the Brazilian image is used as an "inverted mirror" in Argentine domestic debates, presenting Brazil as a rising power and Argentina as a decadent country among those who oppose the government (Russel & Tokatlian, 2011, p. 258).
**Figure 4: Predicted Probit Coefficients (95% Confidence Intervals)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Take Brazil as an example?</th>
<th>UBA</th>
<th></th>
<th>UNdAv</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Kirchneristas</td>
<td>Kirchneristas</td>
<td>Non-Kirchneristas</td>
<td>Kirchneristas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>51% (46%; 55%)</td>
<td>64% (59%; 69%)</td>
<td>47% (42%; 52%)</td>
<td>62% (56%; 68%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>48% (44%; 53%)</td>
<td>35% (30%; 40%)</td>
<td>52% (47%; 57%)</td>
<td>37% (31%; 43%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

**Stable Preferences But in a Specialized Sample?**

What does each sample have to say regarding the treatments? Firstly we present the results of the survey experiment applied at the University of Buenos Aires to 893 students from the Law School (33.52%) and the school of Social Sciences (66.48%). With 308 thousand students, UBA is the oldest and most prestigious Argentinean University. This is in part because before entering their undergraduate course, students must pass a common course that lasts at least one year and where the dropout rate is 40%. In turn, professors and the system as a whole are very exigent compared to other universities, principally for students that have to work or have economic difficulties. Thus, only 23% of the people that enters UBA obtain a degree, which means that we are working with a specialized audience and probably above the population mean in terms of intelligence.

This being clarified, we can see that the two groups that received some type of treatment, even with a variation of 5% and 6% compared to the control group, present no significant differences in their responses as to which strategy Argentina should take in relation to Brazil (See Table 5). Considering the whole sample, this implies that even when exposed to new information, respondents have not changed their preferences on Foreign Policy.

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16 If we just consider the QS ranking indicators “Academic reputation” and “Reputation between employers”, UBA would be the best Latin American university.
TABLE 5: MEAN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EACH TREATMENT GROUP AND THE CONTROL GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framings</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Absolute</th>
<th>Relative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Two tailed T-test * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Source: Elaborated by the authors

Observing the effect of the treatment on subgroups we find that the relative treatment has a statistical and significant effect between people that believe that Argentina is important in the globe (14%) and between people that are usually uninformed about international issues (29%) (See Appendix III).

When asked if Brazil is a leader in South America, if Argentina should imitate Brazilian actions, and about the current and future role of Brazil in the international arena, the answers were also similar to those participants that received no treatment (See Table 6). Therefore, for this sample we can conclude that respondents present stable preferences on Foreign Policy and also coherent perceptions about the international scene.

TABLE 6: PROBIT REGRESSION RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable:</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil is a Leader in South America</td>
<td>-0.068</td>
<td>0.131</td>
<td>-0.181</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil as a Regional Model</td>
<td>(-0.60)</td>
<td>(1.22)</td>
<td>(-1.56)</td>
<td>(-0.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil is a World Leader</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>-0.203</td>
<td>-0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil will be a World Leader</td>
<td>(0.05)</td>
<td>(1.01)</td>
<td>(-1.67)</td>
<td>(-0.07)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Independent Variables:
Absolute Framing
Relative Framing
Controls:
Visited Brazil
Perception about Government
Degree of Nationalism
Degree of Information
Political Ideology
Observations
865
851
873
873

Note: T statistics in parentheses * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
Source: Elaborated by the authors
NOT ALL THE STUDENTS BEHAVE THE SAME: REPLICATING THE EXPERIMENT

While the preferences of respondents in UBA remained stable, this could be because students of Social Sciences and Law from this university may behave as a “specialized audience”, that is, people that pay more attention to, and have a higher knowledge of, international politics than the population at large. Therefore, we decided to replicate our experiment at UNdAv on 624 students from Nursing (17.32%), Engineering (30.56%), Environmental Studies (12.58%), Physical Education (11.93%), Arts (3.27%), Journalism (16.18%) and Social Sciences (8.17%).

Located in Avellaneda, on the periphery of the city of Buenos Aires, UNdAv was recently created in 2011. With 8000 students, mostly from a ‘first generation’ and without graduates yet, the university seeks to fulfill the role of social support and be a tool to reintegrate young people who had been excluded from the university system. In this sense, the courses offered are quite diversified in order to respond to a social atmosphere different from UBA. For example, if we compare the average income level in both samples, the level of government approval, and the percentage of students in each case that have visited Brazil (See Table 7), we see that these are different audiences, UNdAv students being much poorer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 7: COMPARISON BETWEEN THE TWO SAMPLES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visited Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UBA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNDAV</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Elaborated by the authors

That said, we can see that respondents who received information on Brazilian growth and military spending, compared to the information on Argentina, changed their preferences by 11% (See Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 8: MEAN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EACH TREATMENT GROUP AND THE CONTROL GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two tailed test * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

17 They are the first in their families to attend to university
When looking for the effect on subgroups we see that the relative treatment had more effect on people who are usually uninformed about international themes and primarily among those that assign greater importance to Argentina on the international stage (See Appendix IV). Meanwhile, among people who received the relative treatment and who gave greater importance to Brazil in the following 10 years, their perception of the world changed (See Table 9).

**TABLE 9: PROBIT REGRESSION RESULTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable:</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brazil is a Leader in South America</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>-0.0616</td>
<td>0.265*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.51)</td>
<td>(1.57)</td>
<td>(-0.46)</td>
<td>(2.08)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil as a Regional Model</td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>-0.138</td>
<td>0.0974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.55)</td>
<td>(0.81)</td>
<td>(-1.03)</td>
<td>(0.77)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil is a World Leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil will be a World Leader</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Independent Variables:**

- Absolute Framing
- Relative Framing
- Visited Brazil
- Perception about Government
- Degree of Nationalism
- Degree of Information
- Political Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: t statistics in parentheses* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Finally, when consulted on whether Brazil is the leader in South America and if Argentina should take Brazilian actions as an example, the responses also appeared similar to those of participants who did not receive any treatment.

**CONCLUSIONS AND A RESEARCH AGENDA THAT REMAINS OPEN**

Is public opinion consistent regarding Foreign Policy? The answer is that it depends. Through an experimental survey we present some new findings that contribute to the long-term discussion previously presented. First of all, as Barabas and Jerit recognize (2010, p. 226), survey experiments generate effects that are observable among particular subgroups and not necessarily in the entire population.
We found empirical evidence to assert that the frequency with which people inform themselves about Foreign Policy is a determinant factor, as its effects were perceived in both samples. In this sense, the more information a person has, the more structured the opinion they have about this issue. This being so, we should ask ourselves from where these individuals are getting information about international affairs. The classic literature in the area posits that big media has the role of gatekeeping in foreign policy (Hill, 2003, p. 275), because they are the main channel from which most of the population receives information (Puglisi & Snyder, 2011) and because it is an issue for which many people do not have personal contact (Soroka, 2003, p.28). However, new media and means of communication have appeared in the last few years, and with the increasing use of social networks, the idea that traditional media still hold a this monopoly of information is becoming disputed.

On the other hand, we also find in both samples that the more relevance a person gives to his or her country in the international arena, the more susceptible the individual to new information that shows country’s weakness compared to other countries. This finding is interesting if we think of Putnam’s two-level games logic (1988). Through a nationalist discourse politicians could influence the electorate and take advantage in the domestic debate. Taking this idea as a reference we also corroborate Russel & Tokatlian’s hypothesis, who suggest that Brazilian image is used as an "inverted mirror" in the Argentine domestic debate, presenting Brazil as a rising power and Argentina as a decadent country in order to criticize the actual government (2011, p.258)

Thirdly, we make an important methodological contribution by showing that not all students behave the same, and so a researcher has to know which type of participants are involved when we construct convenience samples. A priori we could say that the UBA’s sample is closer to a specialist one, while people interviewed at UNDAV are more representative of the Argentinean general population. However, to corroborate this hypothesis we should apply a population-based experiment (Mutz, 2011), something we expect to be done in future research.

Finally, we may recognize that one of the strengths of our paper is one of its weaknesses. As we previously showed, most of the studies that have tried to analyze the level of consistency of public opinion about Foreign Policy use as reference information collected in developed countries –mainly the United States—and, because of that, by
carrying on our experiment in a developing country we are contributing with a new case in the literature. However, there might be cultural differences as well as specific characteristics of each country that may affect the degree of consistency of public opinion regarding Foreign Affairs (Hermann and Ozkececi-Taner, 2011). Hence, in order to draw general conclusions about “Public Opinion” we should redo this type of research in countries with different characteristics, in order to isolate specific effects.

REFERENCES


Dasgupta, N., & Hunsinger, M. (2008). The opposite of a great truth is also true: When do student samples help versus hurt the scientific study of prejudice?. *Psychological Inquiry, 19*(2), 90-98.


APPENDIX I – ABSOLUTE TREATMENT

“De acuerdo a estadísticas del Banco Mundial, el Producto Bruto Interno de Brasil alcanzó en 2013 la suma de US$ 2.253 mil millones de dólares, habiendo crecido un 340% en los últimos 10 años. A su vez, las Fuerzas Armadas brasileras están compuestas por 327 mil tropas activas y su presupuesto alcanzó en 2013 la suma de US$ 30,3 mil millones.”

“According to World Bank statistics, the Gross Domestic Product of Brazil reached in 2013 US$ 2 253 billion dollars, having grown 340% in the last 10 years. In addition, the Brazilian Armed Forces are currently composed of 327,000 active troops and their budget in 2013 reached the sum of US$ 30.3 billion.”

APPENDIX II – RELATIVE TREATMENT

“De acuerdo a estadísticas del Banco Mundial, el Producto Bruto Interno de Brasil alcanzó en 2013 la suma de US$ 2.253 mil millones de dólares, habiendo crecido un 340% en los últimos 10 años y haciendo con que la economía brasiler sea 5,5 veces más grande que la argentina. A su vez, las Fuerzas Armadas brasileras están compuestas por 327.000 tropas activas y su presupuesto alcanzó en 2013 la suma de US$ 30,3 mil millones. Por su parte, el número de tropas activas en la Argentina es de 86.000 y el presupuesto militar es de US$ 5,2 mil millones, tan solo 15% del brasiler.”

“According to World Bank statistics, the Gross Domestic Product of Brazil reached in 2013 US$ 2 253 billion dollars, having grown 340% in the last 10 years. This is 5.5 times larger than Argentina’s. In addition, the Brazilian Armed Forces are composed of 327,000 active troops and their budget in 2013 was US$ 30.3 billion. The number of active troops in Argentina is currently 86,000 active troops and the military budget is US$ 5.2 billion, 15% of the Brazilian budget.”
## APPENDIX III: STRATEGY TOWARDS BRAZIL RISE (UBA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kircheristas</th>
<th>Non-Kirchneristas</th>
<th>Nationalists</th>
<th>Non-Nationalists</th>
<th>Non Informed</th>
<th>Informed</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolute Framing</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.175</td>
<td>0.186</td>
<td>0.167</td>
<td>0.191</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>0.113</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1.03)</td>
<td>(1.14)</td>
<td>(1.15)</td>
<td>(0.92)</td>
<td>(0.98)</td>
<td>(1.17)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
<td>(1.17)</td>
<td>(1.06)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Framing</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.393*</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>0.414*</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.217</td>
<td>0.246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.85)</td>
<td>(1.61)</td>
<td>(2.35)</td>
<td>(-0.00)</td>
<td>(2.05)</td>
<td>(0.66)</td>
<td>(1.00)</td>
<td>(1.42)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1.58)</td>
<td>(0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.017***</td>
<td>-0.967***</td>
<td>-1.091***</td>
<td>-0.842***</td>
<td>-1.056***</td>
<td>-0.943***</td>
<td>-0.848***</td>
<td>-1.107***</td>
<td>-0.980***</td>
<td>-1.020***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(-7.02)</td>
<td>(-8.26)</td>
<td>(-9.00)</td>
<td>(-6.04)</td>
<td>(-7.18)</td>
<td>(-8.12)</td>
<td>(-6.51)</td>
<td>(-8.57)</td>
<td>(-9.70)</td>
<td>(-4.83)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: t statistics in parentheses | * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001
# Appendix IV: Strategy Towards Brazil Rise (UNDAV)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government Approval</th>
<th>Degree of Nationalism</th>
<th>Degree of Information</th>
<th>Visited Brazil</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Kirchneristas</td>
<td>Kirchneristas</td>
<td>Non-Nationalists</td>
<td>Nationalists</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absolute Framing</td>
<td>0.183</td>
<td>0.0768</td>
<td>-0.0387</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.0758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
<td>(0.42)</td>
<td>(-0.17)</td>
<td>(1.16)</td>
<td>(0.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative Framing</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.0679</td>
<td>0.467**</td>
<td>0.443*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.83)</td>
<td>(1.72)</td>
<td>(0.3)</td>
<td>(2.77)</td>
<td>(2.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.866***</td>
<td>-0.758***</td>
<td>-0.833***</td>
<td>-0.786***</td>
<td>-0.863***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-5.64)</td>
<td>(-5.86)</td>
<td>(-5.19)</td>
<td>(-6.25)</td>
<td>(-6.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: t statistics in parentheses | * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001