

Weekly Asado



Wilson Center

Argentina Project

Friday, December 7, 2018



In the run-up to South America's first G-20 summit, November 30 to December 1, it is fair to say expectations were low. Last year's summit, in Hamburg, Germany, is remembered for violent demonstrations and diplomatic tensions. As for the Buenos Aires gathering, Christine Lagarde [said](#), "everybody expected it to be a fiasco."

Social tensions, attempted [bombings](#) at the Recoleta cemetery and at the house of a prominent federal judge, and [violent clashes](#) between Boca and River fans raised questions about Argentina's ability to prevent street clashes and terrorism from overwhelming the G-20 summit.

Another fear was that U.S. opposition to addressing climate change would poison G-20 negotiations, as occurred in Hamburg, or that trade tensions between the United States and China would torpedo a summit communique, as had occurred at the [latest](#) APEC summit, in Papua New Guinea, earlier in November.

Fortunately for President Mauricio Macri, none of this came to pass.

At the Argentina G-20, there were few [major protests](#), and the world's two great powers agreed to the [leaders' communique](#) and even reached a [truce](#) over their escalating trade dispute. Argentina showcased its culture and diverse landscape in a [show](#) at the historic Teatro Colón, where the warm reception brought Mr. Macri to [tears](#). The summit was hailed by a [number of world leaders](#) as a success. Ms. Lagarde seemed overjoyed.

Observers who had followed Argentina's hosting of the World Trade Organization ministerial last December, and its cooperation with the United States on G-20 summit security, were not surprised by Argentina's smooth management of the G-20's logistical challenges. Even so, hosting the G-20 while knee-deep in an International Monetary Fund bailout was still a public relations gamble. After all, *Argentina is suffering its worst recession since the 2009 global economic crisis*, and the timing of the G-20 seemed inopportune for showcasing the country's investment climate. Prior to the summit, the Argentine public was [split](#) about whether the country would benefit from the high-profile event, according to the [ArgentinaPulse](#), a survey by the Wilson Center and Poliarquía.

It is now clear Mr. Macri's gamble paid off. Leaders in town for the summit not only showered Argentina with praise, but also approved billions of dollars in trade and investment deals, including agreements with the [United States](#), [Russia](#) and [China](#). Argentina is newly positioned as a critical U.S. ally in Latin America and a potential honest broker between the United States and China.

When the G-20 formed in 1999 – as a complement to the G-7 – Argentina was governed by the pro-market Carlos Menem. Argentina's [invitation](#) to join the G-20 was considered a reward for Mr. Menem's economic liberalization, and his embrace of the White House and European allies. The country was seen as a model reformer by the international financial community, and enjoyed the IMF's [full support](#). But for the 12 years of Kirchner rule (2003 to 2015), *Argentina was hostile to the G-20's free trade mission*, and largely shunned by the United States and Europe. Before the first G-20 leaders' summit, in 2008 in Washington, Argentina's president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, traveled to the United Nations to [assail](#) the United States and the IMF for promoting failed market reforms and attempting to control Argentina's economy.

At the G-20 that year, and in future summits, Ms. Fernández de Kirchner reportedly had testy interactions with her democratic counterparts, including an awkward exchange with British Prime Minister David Cameron over the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands. At the 2013 G-20 summit, in Saint Petersburg, Russia, several presidents [switched off](#) their headphones in the middle of Ms. Fernández de Kirchner's lengthy monologue about Argentina's dispute with holdouts bondholders.

In Washington, a topic of casual conversation was whether the G-20 had any mechanism for expelling a member.

Now, under President Macri, Argentina is a welcomed member of the G-20 again. Without the economic growth of the early Menem years, Argentina does not command the same attention from foreign investors. But once again, the United States, Europe and the IMF have high hopes for a newly liberalizing Argentina. Given the still raw memories of the Kirchner years, Argentina's international allies have offered Mr. Macri an unusually long red carpet.

Mr. Macri, who often complains about his *herencia pesada* from Ms. Fernández de Kirchner, recognizes that diplomatic leg up. The G-20 summit, he [said](#), was a “gesture of support and recognition of Argentina’s international role and behavior after so many years of isolation.”

Argentina pulse

POLIARQUÍA - WILSON CENTER SURVEY

ARGENTINES' OPINIONS ON TRADE, FOREIGN POLICY, AND GLOBAL ISSUES G-20 EDITION



...and another **47%** don't.

Argentines want their government to use the summit to:

- 1) Attract new **investment** 38%
- 2) Establish **joint policies** among countries 18%
- 3) Improve **Argentina's image** in the world 14%

Macri's Agenda at the G-20

Which leaders should Macri meet with at the G-20?



Trump
39%



Xi
37%



Merkel
34%

Which issues should Macri prioritize in his meetings with world leaders?



Poverty
50%



Investment
32%



Narco-trafficking
28%

Only **3** out of **10** Argentines have heard of the G-20 Summit and know what it is about

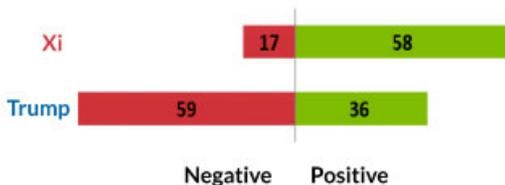


Argentina and the World



View of World Leaders

3 out of 5 Argentines hold a negative image of Donald Trump, compared to less than 1 out of 5 who see Xi Jinping in a negative light

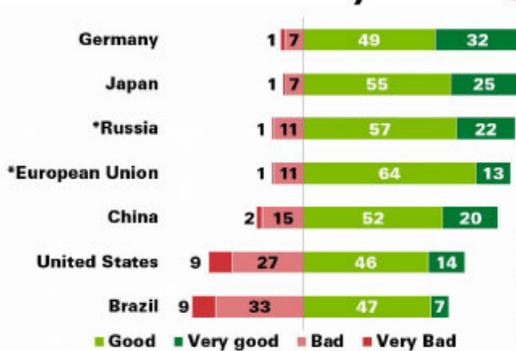


Since our August poll...

Trump's positive image increased by 8%

His negative image decreased by 5%

View of Major Foreign Powers



of Argentines hold a positive view of China...

... while for the United States this number is only



China ▼ 9%

U.S. ▼ 7%

Both countries have fallen in popularity since the last ArgentinaPulse poll in August.



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