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Abstract
Economic and political dynamics of diaspora are relevant to understanding not only the homeland but also the making of a regional order farther afield. Between the 1950s and the early 1990s, Lebanese at the urban tri-border between Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina imported and exported merchandise as well as publicized liberationist ideals from the Arab and Islamic worlds. This article shows that their economic and political networks helped to draw Paraguay within the expansive orbit of Brazil and away from Argentina’s historic sway. Shaped by, and helping to shape, competing state and national interests through “everyday geopolitics,” Lebanese traders and activists unevenly linked Paraguayan commerce to Brazil’s growing consumer and industrial base and reinforced the hierarchical alliance between these respective authoritarian and democratic regimes. In bringing the once Argentine-dominated Paraguay into Brazil’s sphere of influence, this Lebanese diaspora helped to redraw a South American order.

Diasporic traders and activists give shape to not only the homeland but also the places their far-flung networks reach. However, over the last quarter-century, the “veritable explosion of interest” in diaspora limited the study of its economics and politics to the homeland. Whether examining kin relationships, remittances, or long-distance nationalisms, political scientists and sociologists drew upon a conventional definition of diaspora as primarily oriented toward “a real or imagined ‘homeland.’” Their lines of inquiry hardly engaged with more interdisciplinary studies of cultural and intellectual exchanges across diaspora which de-emphasized the homeland orientation in efforts to theorize alternative geographies, such as the Black Atlantic, the Latino Americas, the Pacific Rim, as well as the Indian Ocean. By following this analytical shift away from the homeland, I aim to re-conceptualize diasporic trade and activism in the making of a regional order farther afield.

This economic and political “de-centering” of the homeland in diaspora studies is key to understand Muslim Lebanese who, since the early 1950s,
settled at the so-called “tri-border” where Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina meet, called the *triplice fronteira* (in Portuguese) or the *triple frontera* (in Spanish). By the 1980s, they headed business associations and participated in the transition from military rule in the two main cities at this border: Brazil’s Foz do Iguaçu and Paraguay’s Ciudad Presidente Stroessner (renamed Ciudad del Este after 1989). However, from the 1990s to today, mostly Argentine- and U.S.-based scholars and analysts questioned their business dealings and political loyalties. Fixated on the unresolved 1992 and 1994 bombings of an Israeli embassy and a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, these authors solely viewed Muslim Lebanese in terms of their putative ties to political forces in the Middle East that would allegedly plan such attacks. Instead of only considering such a homeland orientation, I ask how this diaspora at the tri-border also participated in South America’s regional order.

Between the 1950s and the early 1990s, Lebanese in Foz do Iguaçu and Ciudad Presidente Stroessner imported and exported merchandise as well as publicized liberationist ideals from the Arab and Islamic worlds. This article shows that their economic and political networks helped to draw Paraguay within the expansive orbit of Brazil and away from Argentina’s historic sway. In unevenly linking Paraguayan commerce to Brazil’s growing consumer and industrial base since the 1970s, Lebanese in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner imported luxury items from Panama to be sold to (non-Arab) Brazilian consumers, while their counterparts in Foz do Iguaçu exported Brazilian-made manufactures to (non-Arab) Paraguayan traders. Similarly reinforcing the unequal alliance between democratic Brazil and authoritarian Paraguay in the 1980s, Lebanese merchants’ public support of Arab or Muslim liberationist causes fit into the democratic status quo in Foz do Iguaçu as well as its delay in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. In bringing the once Argentine-dominated Paraguay into Brazil’s sphere of influence, Lebanese at the tri-border helped to redraw a South American order.

My article grasps this diasporic formation of regional hierarchy through what I call “everyday geopolitics,” the ways in which quotidian economic and political practices are shaped by, and help to shape, competing state powers and foreign policy interests in boundary-making. In a discursive line of inquiry, geographers Geraoid Ó Tuathail and John Agnew reconceived geopolitics as state policy and mass media because “simply to describe a foreign policy is to engage in geopolitics, for one is implicitly and tacitly normalizing a particular world.” Their focus on the texts and images used by state, military, and media powers in the making of space was complemented by more recent calls to ethnographically examine actual “social practices” of persons on the ground that engage with and possibly rework top-down boundary-making. In employing discursive and practical approaches, my article asks how Lebanese trade and activism intersected with the developmentalist and security visions of the tri-border shared by
military governments in Brazil (1964-1985) and Paraguay (1954-1989), much to the detriment of Argentina. As both regimes oversaw the building of the world’s largest hydroelectric dam on their sides of the tri-border in the 1970s and ‘80s, Lebanese guided the commercial and civic flows that unevenly converged with multiple state agendas to realign the regional order.

Based on fifteen months of archival and ethnographic research on Brazilian, Paraguayan, and Argentine sides of an urban borderland, I show that state powers remade space to attract such flows from farther afield. Formed by the Paraná River between Brazil and Paraguay as well as the Iguacu River between Brazil and Argentina, this triplace fronteira / triple frontera mitigates national interests of development and security as well as transnational flows of persons, goods, and ideas. On the national scale of analysis, my article begins well before the Brazilian and Paraguayan states’ 1965 opening of the Ponte da Amizade (Friendship Bridge) between Foz do Iguacu and Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, and concludes shortly after the Brazilian and Argentine states’ 1985 inauguration of the Ponte Tancredo Neves (Tancredo Neves Bridge) between Foz do Iguacu and Puerto Iguazu, the tri-border’s least important town on Argentina’s side where few Arabs settled. On the transnational scale, I attend to migrants from the Bekkaa Valley and South Lebanon, their commercial networks to Panama and the Brazilian coast, as well as their political rapprochements toward Arab and Islamic worlds. In looking at the role of state powers in the building of the bridges that came to be crisscrossed by Lebanese traders and activists, this article reveals the intertwined histories of the national and transnational. Just as national states opened up new cross-border communication routes and relations, the transnational trajectories of migrants enabled the regional ascent of Brazil.

ARAB MIGRANT HISTORY OF A SOUTH AMERICAN BORDER

Initially stemming from two villages in the Bekkaa Valley, Balloul and Lela, migrants unevenly spread across what was then called the “region of the three borders.” As his father had done in the 1890s, Ibrahim Barakat left Balloul in April 1950. After passing through the Brazilian port of Santos, he reached the city of São Paulo and “peddled with some friends....” Ibrahim’s sales routes eventually led him to the western edge of the state of Paraná. According to his son, “My father said that at the time, there was not any cloth or clothing. In two or three weeks, he sold everything and, it was like this, he remained traveling between São Paulo and Foz do Iguacu.” Ibrahim set up a shop of clothing and accessories on Avenida Brasil (Brazil Avenue), the main thoroughfare in Foz do Iguacu, western Paraná’s then isolated city founded on Brazil’s side of the border only in 1889. Lebanese traders connected this peripheral territory to Brazil’s manufacturing base in São Paulo, the then economic center of the nation.
In 1951, Ahmed Hamad Rahal left Balloul with a similar trajectory. Arriving with empty pockets in São Paulo, his peddling routes became more lucrative as he refilled his trunks with larger amounts of clothing and accessories sold across Paraná. When he first reached Foz do Iguaçu in the early 1950s, this Rahal encountered a few other Arab families, including the Barakat’s. A decade before the building of the bridge between Foz do Iguaçu and Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, Rahal traveled by boat to sell his wares to hamlets on the Paraná River between Brazil and Paraguay. In 1953, his brother, Mohamad, arrived in Foz do Iguaçu. His wife followed three years later. By 1958, with the start-up capital saved through petty commerce, the brothers, Ahmed and Mohamad Rahal, opened a store, A Casa das Fábricas, on Avenida Brasil, and later on, founded a commercial export firm that catered to Paraguayan clients.17

Also from Balloul, Mohamed Ali Osman migrated to join his brother who was living near the city of Londrina in northern Paraná. In the early 1950s, a patrício (countryman) gave this Osman a trunk full of clothes, and as he remembered, “I went off peddling... I would sell on the farms, plantations, and in the coffee fields of the region.” This Osman soon after started a business buying and selling coffee beans and other grains. In 1959, his younger brother, Mustapha, also arrived and peddled in the northern part of the state. With their savings, the two brothers headed further west to Foz do Iguaçu and opened a lojinha (little store) of cloth and knickknacks (armarinhos) on Avenida Brasil. As examined later, the Osman brothers went on to establish a commercial export firm, Têxtil Osman Ltda., whose customers included many Paraguayans. Lebanese traders not only connected Brazil’s economic center to its own periphery, but also began to extend such influence into then Argentine-dominated Paraguay.

At least in retrospect, these and other migrants were well aware of their role in South America’s changing order. According to Mohamad Rahal, Lebanese chose Foz do Iguaçu because “we found the tourist potential was significant and the fact of bordering with two other countries was really important. We knew that Paraguay wasn’t industrialized, as it still is today, so we were certain that Paraguay would be a great market for industrialized goods.”18 Indeed, migrants first peddled goods from São Paulo and then opened shops with Brazilian manufactures for domestic consumers in Foz do Iguaçu and also the incipient Paraguayan market. Abdul Rahal, another member of beyt Rahal (Rahal clan) who likewise arrived in the 1950s, recalled: “I got to the point where I spent five days sleeping, feeling cold in the woods in Paraguay.” As a self-proclaimed pioneer introducing Brazilian goods into the “East of Paraguay,” this Rahal explained that “at that time, around 1959, Argentina was the power over Paraguay. Only Argentine products were allowed.” So when he used his boat to cross the Paraná River hawking Brazilian goods to Paraguayans, Rahal laughed, “it was if they had seen a snake with two heads.”19 Indeed, in 1960, Argentina was the largest
source of imports into Paraguay, while Brazil accounted for less than one percent. In recounting their own history, Lebanese in Foz do Iguaçu envisioned Paraguay as dominated by Argentina but potentially acquiescent to Brazil.

In post-WWII times, Brazilian and Paraguayan military governments welcomed this possibility at the border. Although Argentina held a “long-run advantage” over Paraguay, an Argentine official, Isaac Rojas, warned that its historic sway was being eroded by Brazil while Argentina’s Clarín newspaper bemoaned the “progress” on the Brazilian and Paraguayan sides of the border. In March 1965, Brazilian and Paraguayan leaders inaugurated the Friendship Bridge over the Paraná River. Entirely financed by Brazil, the bridge linked the newly constructed Ruta VII highway from Asunción, the capital of landlocked Paraguay, to Brazil’s BR-277 which cut horizontally across Paraná to the port of Paranaguá, near the state’s coastal capital of Curitiba. By conceding a duty-free zone for Paraguay within this port, Brazil’s military government sought to draw Paraguay closer into its political-economic orbit, ensuring the transportation means for Brazilian elites to purchase Paraguayan agricultural goods and to sell Brazilian manufactures. Paraguay’s dictator, Alfredo Stroessner, welcomed the bridge and highway in order to reduce the country’s dependence on Buenos Aires and play off the Argentine-Brazilian rivalry. In his marcha hacia el este (march towards the east), Paraguay’s dictator founded and named after himself “Ciudad Puerto Presidente Stroessner” (President Stroessner Port City) at the sparsely-populated eastern border with Brazil in 1957.

In the early years, this Paraguayan “port on land” was linked into an historically distinct wave of Christian Syrian migrants in Asunción. Well-known for elegant cloth near the Calle 25 de Mayo in the Paraguayan capital, Elias Sabah often traveled to the border to purchase fabric from his counterparts in Foz do Iguaçu (who brought them from São Paulo). As a traveling salesman, Mihail Bazas regularly departed his uncle’s store near the same street in Asunción and followed a route that ended in the Paraguayan border town. Also in the 1960s, Humberto Domínguez Dibb acquired large parcels of land and owned Ciudad Presidente Stroessner’s Acaray Casino, undoubtedly due to his marriage to the daughter of the Paraguayan dictator himself. As most Christian Syrians remained in Asunción, Muslim Lebanese established the first brick and mortar stores in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. In the mid-1960s, a young man from another family in beyt Rahal from Balloul opened the Casa de la Amistad, named after the recently built bridge. It attracted Brazilian consumers in search of name-brand imports – at this time, whiskey, cigarettes, and jeans – without the high taxes of Brazil’s protectionist economy. As explored later, other Lebanese followed Rahal’s example in the 1970s, importing merchandise through Paraguay’s free-duty zone in the port of Paranaguá, Brazil, and likewise catering to Brazilian consumers who regularly crisscrossed the Friendship Bridge.
As Arabs negotiated these boundaries and flows, however, a shooting occurred at the Israeli embassy in Asunción on May 4, 1970. Brazilian, and not Paraguayan, media directed suspicion toward Arabs at the then isolated border. In asking if “the guns used by two Palestinians in the attack against the embassy of Israel in Asunción could have been bought in Foz do Iguaçu Brazil,” a Brazilian newspaper cited the Paraguayan police as a source, but this possibility was not mentioned by the Paraguayan press. Nonetheless, by September 1970, the “Department of Political and Social Order” (D.O.P.S) of Brazil’s Federal Police targeted Arabs on both sides of the Friendship Bridge. Its office in Curitiba solicited the police commissioner in Foz do Iguaçu to investigate several allegations. On a mimeograph entitled “Activities of Arab Terrorist Organizations in Brazil,” D.O.P.S asked whether Lebanese at the border were involved in Palestinian causes and helped plan the embassy attack in Asunción. Three aforementioned Lebanese were named as suspects and alleged contrabandistas (tax-evasive “smugglers”). After a month, however, the local officer responded that there was no evidence that linked the shooting in Paraguay’s capital to the border. His report, however, provided details about Lebanese living in Foz do Iguaçu and operating businesses in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, including passport or ID numbers as well as home and business addresses. In using an unrelated incident in the Paraguayan capital to gather intelligence, the Brazilian state and media sought the compliance of Lebanese merchants in wider plans to remake the Brazilian-Paraguayan border.

Not long after, Lebanese presided over business associations in Foz do Iguaçu and Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. In 1974, Fouad Mohamed Fakih was elected president of the “Commercial and Industrial Association of Foz do Iguaçu,” known by its acronym, Acifi. Founded by lumber traders in the 1950s, Acifi shifted to commercial exporters’ interests with Fakih’s mandates over the next six years. Having departed Balloul and visited the Colombian coast where relatives settled, Fakih catered to Brazilian and Paraguayan clients, surmising that Foz do Iguaçu had “a very promising perspective” because “it bordered on two countries.” Meanwhile, Hussein Taigen founded and was appointed as president of the Cámara de Comércio (Chamber of Commerce) of Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. Also stemming from Balloul, Taigen migrated to Colombia in the early 1960s, and after return-trips to Lebanon, he settled in the Paraguayan border town. Using his contacts from Colombia, Taigen specialized in consumer imports in his well-known store, Casa Colombia (Colombia House). This rise of an Arab commercial class on both sides of the Friendship Bridge took shape just as Brazilian and Paraguayan states signed the “Itaipú Treaty” in 1973, setting the stage for the construction of the world’s largest hydroelectric dam and ushering in a time of uneven astronomical growth.
REALIGNING SOUTH AMERICA’S ECONOMIC ORDER THROUGH DIASPORA

Criticized as a “pharonic” undertaking, the Itaipú dam project between Brazil and Paraguay signaled a changing economic order. For much of the twentieth century, Argentina was Paraguay’s largest trading partner, but by 1982, Brazil surpassed it in terms of imports and exports. Eroding Argentina’s historic sway, the construction of the Itaipú dam between Brazil and Paraguay resulted in a lopsided population explosion at the tri-border from 1970 to 1980: while the Argentine town of Puerto Iguazú grew from 2,998 to 9,151, Brazil’s Foz do Iguaçu jumped from 33,966 to 136,321 and Paraguay’s Ciudad Presidente Stroessner increased seven-fold from 7,085 to 49,423. While the Argentine town across the Iguazú River remained in isolation, Lebanese on the other sides of the border benefitted from and strengthened South America’s novel hierarchy. In Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, Lebanese sold consumer imports to Brazilian middle-classes, while their counterparts in Foz do Iguaçu exported Brazilian manufacturers to Paraguayan businessmen. Through importation and exportation, the Lebanese diaspora circumscribed Paraguay within Brazil’s growing consumer and industrial markets.

In the mid-1960s, Lebanese opened businesses on or near the Avenida San Blás in downtown Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, which is the end of the Paraguayan highway of Ruta VII before the Friendship Bridge. Early migrants emphasized that they catered to “Brazilian buyers” (compristas brasileños) who crisscrossed the bridge to purchase and carry away higher-end consumables that would be far more costly in Brazil. Take for example Faisal Hammoud who, alongside his brothers, Sadek and Sharif, established the Monalisa store that specializes in imported spirits, perfumes, cosmetics, as well as electronics. Faisal departed Balloul for São Paulo in 1968 and first worked as a loader in a factory before setting out for Ciudad Presidente Stroessner with the equivalent of five dollars in his pocket. After some moderate success with a small store in the early 1970s, the Hammoud brothers began construction of their six-story complex that attracted mostly Brazilian customers. Also migrating from Balloul to Ciudad Presidente Stroessner in the early 1970s, the Mannah brothers, Mohamed and Atef, opened La Petisquera (The Morsel-Maker), which specialized in imported spirits, highbrow foods, perfumes, and cosmetics. They became well-known and trusted by their mostly Brazilian clientele because “the source of its products is always legitimate.” Five Hijazi brothers likewise departed Kabrikha in South Lebanon in the first half of the 1970s, and eventually opened Mundo Electronico (Electronic World), specializing in electronic imports of “North-American, Japanese, German, and Panamanian origins.” Located within a stone’s throw of the Friendship Bridge, these and other Lebanese-owned businesses in the Paraguayan border town carried several lines of imported goods that served an expanding consumer market in Brazil.
Lebanese commercialized higher-end products in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner for Brazilian middle-classes through state powers, specifically the “complementary forces” of “Paraguay’s liberalization policies” and “Brazil’s protectionist policies.” Beginning in 1971, the Paraguayan state simplified customs procedures and lowered import tariffs for businesses specifically in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. The subsequently cheaper price tags on luxury imports – especially whiskey, perfumes, and jeans in the 1970s, and electronics in the 1980s – attracted increasing numbers of Brazilian “tourist-shoppers” (turista-compristas) who crossed the Friendship Bridge in order to evade steep Brazilian tariffs “…that reached up to three hundred percent of the imported item’s value.” Having migrated from Bint Jbail in South Lebanon to South America in the 1960s, Mohamed Jebai claimed to have been urged by Paraguay’s dictator to set up a business in the border town because of its “free trade policy.” Although others gossiped that Jebai got his start in commerce only after accepting Stroessner’s wife as his business partner, this Lebanese stated that he began importing electronics from Southeast Asia in the 1970s. With dizzying sales to a mostly Brazilian clientele through Paraguayan laissez-faire tariffs and policies, Jebai used his profits to build Ciudad Presidente Stroessner’s largest shopping and residential complex. According to one of its managers, this Galeria Jebai Center grew to have around 400 stands, roughly forty percent run by Arabs.

Whether importing from Europe, North America, or Southeast Asia, Arabs in Paraguay agreed that Panama’s free trade zone in Colón was a key shipping point in the 1970s and 1980s. One migrant related that contact began when the aforementioned Hussein Taigen visited relatives along the Panamanian and Colombian coast. A primo (cousin) allegedly asked Taigen llevar en su mala (to carry in his baggage) some items para vender (to sell) in Paraguay. Aside from this apocryphal tale, other Lebanese from Balloul were listed as merchants in these and other small towns on Colombia’s coast just before the mid-twentieth century. Those arriving at the Brazilian-Paraguayan border around that time maintained contact with their relatives in Panama and Colombia, both on the island of San Andrés as well as in the coastal cities of Barranquilla, Maicao, and Santa Marta. Whether precipitating or giving rise to the commercial flows from Panama, Lebanese and others in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner during the early 1970s explained that their requisitioned cargo would first take the oceanic route from Panama’s free trade zone to Paraguay’s customs free zone within the Brazilian port of Paranagüa. Next, it would be transported over the BR-277 highway until it reached the Paraguayan customs terminal beside the Friendship Bridge. Here containers with cargo were weighed and, depending on the country of origin, customs officials calculated a one-time tax to be paid by the importers. As recalled by Taigen, the tax varied between seven
and ten percent in the 1970s and most of the 1980s.\textsuperscript{47} In commercializing imports in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, the Lebanese diaspora transformed Paraguay into a cheaper source of merchandise for mostly Brazilian consumers.

Becoming the country’s second largest city in the 1970s, Ciudad Presidente Stroessner showcased Paraguay’s commercial sector that surpassed agricultural and industrial percentages of the country’s GDP from 1982 onward.\textsuperscript{48} At this time, the seven hundred shops in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner were headed by “Arab, Chinese, and Korean immigrants.”\textsuperscript{49} Aside from La Pestiquera, Monalisa, and akin establishments carrying high-end merchandise, most businesses rented small spaces or stands in ten or so shopping complexes – including the Jebai Center, the Galeria Rahal, and the Hijazi Center, founded by the aforementioned migrants from the Bekkaa and South Lebanon. They sold everything from “sophisticated electronics” to the “famous Chinese ointment” (tiger-balm).\textsuperscript{50} Charging half their price in Brazil, these and other Lebanese merchants became known for Sony videocassette recorders, Olympus cameras, and Toshiba or Brother word-processors by the 1980s. They also carried carpets from Iran, perfumes from France, as well as spirits from Scotland, sold at a fraction of their price in Brazil.\textsuperscript{51} Traveling from across Brazil during the 1980s, “housewives, senior citizens, students, liberal professionals, as well as idle folks” were said to cross the Friendship Bridge to “make a Brazilian party in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner.”\textsuperscript{52} Lebanese merchants played a key role in the expansion of Paraguay’s commercial sector that served Brazilian middle-classes.

Although state policies enabled this Lebanese-driven trade, dissonant views came to be expressed about their place in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. Paraguayan elites, including Humberto Domínguez Dibb and his \textit{HOY} newspaper, criticized a tax-evasive practice whereby importers paid off Paraguayan customs officials to reduce the weight of their cargo and thus decrease the amount of tax they would be charged.\textsuperscript{53} This subfaturamento (under-billing), according to Dibb, was the “most important economic crime ever committed in the history of our country.”\textsuperscript{54} Meanwhile in Foz do Iguaçu, a city official complained that tourists use the Brazilian city as a temporary “stop” to shop in Paraguay.\textsuperscript{55} His criticism was echoed by an Osman family member who surmised that “the millions of dollars that enter Paraguay could stay in Foz do Iguaçu.”\textsuperscript{56} Indeed, most Brazilians viewed Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, and Paraguay, as “parasitical,”\textsuperscript{57} despite claims that the money spent in the Paraguayan border town returned to Brazil.\textsuperscript{58} Speaking on behalf of Ciudad Presidente Stroessner’s chamber of commerce, Taigen used this logic when he stated to a Brazilian newspaper that “we sell imported products from five continents for Brazilians in cruzados [Brazil’s then currency]. This cash is deposited in bank establishments in Foz do Iguaçu or used to acquire Brazilian merchandise for consumption or commercialization within Paraguay.”\textsuperscript{59} Although state policies created this very crossroads,
Lebanese traders in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, like the entire border town, were mistrusted by Arabs as well as other elites, in Brazilian and Paraguayan public spheres.

On the other side of the border in Foz do Iguaçu, however, Lebanese were positioned differently. After the construction of the Friendship Bridge, they moved from Avenida Brasil in the city centre to the neighborhoods of Jardim Jupira and Vila Portes next to the bridge itself. Mentioned earlier, Ahmed and Mohamed Rahal used profits from their downtown store to open Exportadora Tupy (Tupy Export) in Jardim Jupira in 1968. They commercialized several lines of merchandise produced by Brazilian industries for Paraguayan clients. Abdul Rahal likewise established the Exportadora Líder (Leader Export) that allegedly earned “12 million cruzados a month selling processed foods and cleaning supplies to Paraguay.” According to this Rahal, “Early on, we would sell only to buyers in the Paraguayan capital of Asunción … [but] Itaipú brought the clientele almost to within our stores.” Having migrated from the village of Lela in 1967, Akra and Mohammad Omeiri similarly opened the Exportadora Real (Royal Export), which a Brazilian newspaper later characterized as “an example of the initiative of immigrants in commercial dealings with Paraguayans.” While their counterparts on Avenida San Blás on the Paraguayan side sold consumer imports to Brazilian middle-classes, these Lebanese on the Brazilian side of the bridge sold Brazilian manufactures to Paraguayan businessmen.

Called the comércio de exportação (commercial exportation), this Lebanese-led exportation of Brazilian goods to Paraguay was enabled and approved by the Brazilian state. After the military took control in 1964, “the rapid growth and diversification of exports was deemed essential” and the government expanded its “export incentive program.” It was “Law-Decree Number 491” of March 1969 that provided “fiscal incentives” for the “exportation of Brazilian manufactures.” By granting tax-exempt status for exporters of Brazilian manufactures, this federal legislation enabled firms to widen profit margins by commercializing Brazilian goods abroad. Lebanese-owned firms mentioned above were among the first of many exportadoras that opened next to the Friendship Bridge crisscrossed by Paraguayan clients and the trucks with Brazilian cargo. By 1976, so many Lebanese ran businesses in the neighborhood next to the bridge that one of its streets was renamed the Avenida República do Líbano (Republic of Lebanon Avenue). According to non-Arab members of the military government’s political party who authored the legislation, “one finds innumerable Lebanese established there, constructing new buildings…” and “they came here when the city still did not offer the best conditions of prosperity, helping the construction of our development…” In the late 1960s and 1970s, Lebanese exporters in Foz do Iguaçu advanced Brazilian state objectives.
Not unlike their diasporic counterparts in Paraguay who drew upon their ties to Panama’s free trade zone, Lebanese in Foz do Iguaçu utilized their trading networks to São Paulo and other coastal Brazilian industrial centers. In the mid-1970s, the Rahal brothers’ Exportadora Tupy became a beer and soft-drink distributor for Brazilian and multi-national companies in São Paulo, starting out “with two trucks and a thousand bottles” that they refilled in Foz do Iguaçu and delivered to Paraguayan customers. Founded by their cousin Abdul Rahal, the Exportadora Líder became the distributor of the São Paulo-based textile company, Alpargatas, allegedly selling 30,000 pairs of blue jeans every month to Paraguayan businesses in the early 1980s. The Omeiri’s Exportadora Real became “the largest reseller of Cônsul,” a household electronics manufacturer in São Paulo, distributing refrigerators, stoves, and the like across Paraguay as well as other “Latin American countries.” Mohammed Osman’s Têxtil Osman Ltda. represented Kraft Foods Inc. and “various Brazilian brands with the exclusive right to exportation across Latin America.” The non-durable and durable goods commercialized by these and other Lebanese exportadoras were shipped from coastal Brazilian industries across the BR-277, stored in commercial exporters’ warehouses in Jardim Jupira or Vila Portes, and after being sold, transported across the Friendship Bridge. Lebanese businessmen would then send a copy of the sales receipt and the tax exemption form to federal and/or state fiscal powers. In widening their profit margins through Brazilian state objectives to increase the commercial exportation of Brazilian manufactures, Lebanese in Foz do Iguaçu drew Paraguay within the expansive reach of Brazilian as well as São Paulo-based multi-national corporations.

According to Acifi and the city government, Foz do Iguaçu’s number of commercial establishments increased ten-fold from 1975 to 1987, and in 1986 alone, the 300 “export businesses” represented one-hundred million dollars of external sales to Paraguay. Almost all of this export-commerce was based out of the neighborhoods of Jardim Jupira and Vila Portes, whose many Lebanese-run stores carried canned foods, grains, textiles, household appliances, and heavier machinery. In 1987, the former president of Acifi, Fouad Fakih, noted that “Paraguays are responsible for seventy-five percent of all this [commercial] movement...” Fakih continued: “Paraguay doesn’t produce practically anything and its population can’t afford to buy what is sold in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, expensive products directed toward [Brazilian] tourists.” As a result, he concluded, Paraguayans shopped for clothing, foodstuffs, as well as home appliances in Foz do Iguaçu. Indeed, for several months in 1985, commerce in Foz do Iguaçu nearly ground to a halt when Paraguayans’ purchasing power was limited due to the suddenly devalued Paraguayan currency (the guarani). This cross-border trade was evident when Mohamed Osman received a blank check from a Paraguayan client who asked him to fill in the cost of her purchase. “It’s trust,” Osman noted. As they had done since their peddling days, Lebanese increased the
sales of Brazilian industrialized goods to Paraguayan traders and consumers, and economically reinforced Brazil’s influence over Paraguay.

Although spatially enabled by state policies, Lebanese commercial networks based in Foz do Iguaçu drew increased scrutiny. Brazilian fiscal authorities suspected export firms of tax-evasion, reflecting that “merchandise marked for exportation [to Paraguay] is diverted … [and] sold to local [Brazilian] customers … Without the payment of federal taxes, Brazilian merchandise … is worth 50 percent less than its price in the domestic market.” Akin claims of tax-evasion were voiced by Paraguayan elites in Asunción. Mentioned earlier, Dibb’s HOY newspaper complained that Brazilian-made products were brought into Paraguay “without paying any taxes,” thereby out-pricing Paraguay’s national industry. In response to being questioned by Brazilian and Paraguayan state authorities, Lebanese in Foz do Iguaçu spoke of their businesses as not only providing manufactured goods that Paraguay lacked, as remarked earlier, but also strengthening Brazil’s own development. Arriving in Foz do Iguaçu in 1961 and naturalizing as a citizen in 1975, Ibrahim Barakat’s son, Mohamed, characterized Lebanese-led commercial exportation to Paraguay as “the Arab contribution to Brazilian development.” Like their counterparts in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, Lebanese in Foz do Iguaçu were suspected of unseemly business practices at the same time they strengthened the realignment of Paraguay toward Brazil’s economic orbit.
REIMAGINING SOUTH AMERICA’S POLITICAL ORDER THROUGH DIASPORA

As Argentina was displaced by Brazil as Paraguay’s economic patron, a complex political transition took shape. Reinstating civilian government in 1983 and 1985, Argentina and Brazil supported conflicting blocs in authoritarian Paraguay whose ruling party, the *Partido Colorado*, stayed in power after the 1989 fall of the dictatorship. Argentina backed Paraguayan forces that were opposed to the political party of Stroessner’s regime while Brazil’s military or civilian government “…naturally chose the side of Stroessner and his Colorado Party in its attempt to separate Paraguay from Argentina.” For the National War College (ADESG) that defined Brazil’s security policies during military rule and beyond, “the government of President Alfredo Stroessner and the *Partido Colorado* are sustained by Paraguay’s alliance with Brazil.” In the 1980s, ADESG noted that favorable Brazilian economic policies helped Paraguay reduce its “dependence on Argentina” and, in return, the subsequent growth of Ciudad Presidente Stroessner “brought benefits to Brazilian border cities, namely Foz do Iguaçu.” At this time, Lebanese at the border took up the causes of Libya or Iran, and Palestine, as well as publicized critiques of U.S. intervention in the Middle East and Latin America. Though converging with civilian rule in the Brazilian domestic sphere, their liberationist stance acquiesced to Paraguay’s authoritarian bloc that remained in power even after 1989. Upholding the democratic status quo in Foz do Iguaçu and its authoritarian delay in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, the Lebanese diaspora reinforced the novel political hierarchy between Brazil and Paraguay.

Deftly appealing to pro-democracy and authoritarian forces on Brazil’s side of the border, mostly Lebanese founded associations *not* in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner, but rather in Foz do Iguaçu: in 1962, they inaugurated the *Clube União Árabe* (Arab Union Club), a country club for mostly Lebanese and some Palestinian families; in 1978, they established the *Sociedade Islâmica Beneficente* (Islamic Charity Society), which came to attract mostly Shia Lebanese who hosted religious observances as well as championed the Iranian revolution and Palestinian liberation; in 1981, Sunni Arabs created the *Centro Cultural Beneficente Muçulmana* (Muslim Charity Cultural Center) that soon after constructed a mosque on land donated by Foz do Iguaçu’s city government; and in the same year, the *Centro Cultural Árabe-Brasileiro* (Arab-Brazilian Cultural Center), began to publicly advocate for Libyan and Palestinian causes. These institutions were based on Brazil’s side of the border not only because Arabs who owned businesses in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner actually resided with their families in Foz do Iguaçu. More importantly, Arabs chose to mobilize in Brazil and not Paraguay due to the Brazilian military government’s political opening (*abertura política*) and concomitant support of authoritarian rule in Paraguay. The Brazilian regime’s last two heads of state, Ernesto Geisel
John Tofik Karam (1974 – 1979) and João Figueirido (1979-1985), both politically liberalized Brazil and renewed ties with Stroessner’s dictatorship. Accordingly, Lebanese contributed to civil society in Foz do Iguaçu as well as its concomitant delay in Ciudad Presidente Stroessner.

This lopsided institutionalization of the Lebanese diaspora at the tri-border was evident at an event in Foz do Iguaçu in June 1981. Organized by the “Arab-Brazilian Cultural Center,” the occasion honored the visit of the Libyan ambassador and was covered by Foz do Iguaçu’s pro-democracy, leftist newspaper, Nosso Tempo. The Lebanese speakers at the event condemned “capitalist exploitation” and praised the socialist pretension of Qaddafi’s Libya, rebuked “North American imperialism” and Zionism, as well as exalted liberation struggles in El Salvador, Libya, Nicaragua, and Palestine. What drew the attention of the Nosso Tempo journalist, however, was not the three hundred guests who were almost entirely Lebanese from Foz do Iguaçu and Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. Rather, it was the presence of military or state officials from each side of the tri-border who were “committed to the rightist, reactionary ideology of the three countries,” including Foz do Iguaçu’s Army Commander and Federal Police chief, Ciudad Presidente Stroessner’s appointed mayor, as well as the Argentine consul in Foz do Iguaçu. For Nosso Tempo, Lebanese attendees celebrated the liberationist causes of the “Arab homeland” while they remained silent about political oppression in South America. However, this leftist newspaper overlooked the fact that the actual event – held in Foz do Iguaçu and not Ciudad Presidente Stroessner – reflected the wider symbiosis between a politically-liberalizing Brazil and an authoritarian-entrenched Paraguay.

Based in Foz do Iguaçu, Lebanese-led organizations constructed political or religious homelands not limited to Lebanon. Although the Centro Cultural Árabe-Brasileiro sponsored Arabic language courses and Ramadan food distribution drives, it became known for its public support of Muammar Qaddafi as leading the liberation of the Third World. In the center’s marches and statements, Sunni Lebanese stressed that Qaddafi stood in solidarity with the Sandinistas against the U.S.-backed Somoza regime in Nicaragua and supported the people’s struggle in El Salvador. It distributed the Portuguese translation of Qaddafi’s The Green Book and hosted annual commemorations of the 1969 defeat of the U.S. as well as Qaddafi’s victory. While this Lebanese-led center idealized Qaddafi and the Libyan revolution, the Sociedade Beneficente Islâmica championed the Iranian revolutionary government and Palestinian self-determination. Probably due to Qaddafi’s role in the disappearance of Musa al-Sadr, a popular Shia leader in Lebanon during the 1970s, most Shia Lebanese steered clear of the Centro Cultural Árabe-Brasileiro but framed diasporic sentiments in parallel ways. Take for example the Sociedade Beneficente Islâmica’s public characterization of the “International Day of Jerusalem” not only as a date to remember Palestine’s capital but also as the “day of the oppressed against the oppressors,” which
were identified as Israel and the U.S.. Although respectively adopting Libya and Iran as points of reference, each Foz do Iguaçu-based diasporic organization constructed a homeland in liberationist terms.

These associations also cultivated ties with Brazilian pro-democracy forces, including Nosso Tempo, the aforementioned non-Arab, non-Muslim newspaper founded with a “critical editorial line” in 1980 and harassed by military rulers. After it featured Shia Lebanese who felt more “united” and pious after a visit from Brazil’s Iranian ambassador in 1984, one of Nosso Tempo’s co-founders was invited to visit Tehran in order to observe a “week of war” with Iraq. In concluding a two-page article about his time in “the land of the Ayatollahs,” the journalist criticized Iran as “just one more country of the Third World serving the interests of imperialism that needs wars in order to sell people-killing machines.”

In the same year it rebuked the Iranian revolutionary cause idealized by many Shia Lebanese, Nosso Tempo and other pro-democracy activists were invited by the “Arab-Brazilian Cultural Center” to participate in Libya’s “revolutionary congress.” The Brazilian delegation included a few Sunni Lebanese migrants, Nosso Tempo’s editor, as well as members of the Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB, or Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement). With official support from PMDB leaders, the Nosso Tempo editor remembered that he and other Brazilian leftists greeted Qaddafi as a critic of U.S. imperialism, and saw in Libya “…a society more egalitarian than our own.” Whether dismissed or embraced, Lebanese diasporic politics sought the support of Brazilian pro-democracy forces for liberationist causes in Arab and Islamic homelands.

At the same time, Lebanese-led associations remained silent about the Paraguayan dictatorship. Just before the “International Congress in Solidarity with the Libyan Revolution,” Nosso Tempo planned the Jornada de Solidariedade ao Povo Paraguaio (March in Support of the Paraguayan People). It was held in Foz do Iguaçu in August 1984 and was repeated the following year. Besides Nosso Tempo, the organizers included students and activists who criticized Stroessner and the Brazilian state’s official support of him. Conspicuously absent among three-hundred participants were Lebanese from Foz do Iguaçu or Ciudad Presidente Stroessner as well as their associations such as the Centro Cultural Árabe-Brasileiro and the Sociedade Beneficente Islâmica. Although the idealizer of the Paraguayan solidarity campaign, Nosso Tempo, attended to Arab and Islamic liberationist causes, Lebanese merchants steered clear of a leftist Brazilian protest against Stroessner which would have brought Paraguayan officials’ retribution on their businesses. Indeed, in 1984 and 1985, Paraguayan secret services gathered intelligence at these Paraguayan pro-democracy events on the Brazilian side of the border, recording the names of the organizers and speakers. Given that secret police sought their acquiescence a decade and a half previously, Lebanese avoided criticism of an unequal South American
political order. Inflecting Brazil’s influence over Paraguay, diasporic activism for Arab and Islamic liberationist causes fit into a democratizing Foz do Iguacu and an authoritarian Ciudad Presidente Stroessner.

Changes in Puerto Iguazú on the Argentine side were concurrently underway. In late 1985, the new civilian presidents of Argentina and Brazil inaugurated the Ponte Tancredo Neves (also called the Puente de la Fraternidad in Argentina). Built over the Iguaçu River, it linked Puerto Iguazú to Brazil’s Foz do Iguacu. Although this bridge was touted as an engine for growth, the valorization of the Argentine currency some years later brought far greater numbers of Argentines to shop across the bridge in Foz do Iguacu. As the construction of the Ponte Tancredo Neves precipitated the stagnation of the Argentine border town, Foz do Iguacu became the axis between Puerto Iguazu and Ciudad Presidente Stroessner within the urban tri-border region. Although flows of goods and persons generally varied with exchange rate fluctuations between the U.S. dollar and the three South American currencies, Foz do Iguacu became the trinational border’s only city with a bridge to the other two sides.97 Rather than reassert Argentina’s historic sway in the region, the 1985 inauguration of the Ponte Tancredo Neves reconfirmed Brazil’s ascension at the dawn of a democratic Southern Cone.

Taking advantage of this political opening in the second half of the 1980s and early 1990s, Lebanese continued to mobilize, not in the Argentine border town of Puerto Iguazu where few settled, but rather in Foz do Iguacu and Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. Many of their public protests and declarations were made in support of Palestine and against Zionism.98 In Foz do Iguacu, Mohamad Barakat, one of the main organizers of the Arab-Brazilian Cultural Center and the Brazilian delegation to Libya, joined PMDB, the political party opposed to authoritarian rule. Three years after this party took over the Brazilian state, Barakat ran for city council in Foz do Iguacu.99 Due to his influence within local party ranks, the PMDB-ruled city government officially recognized 29 November as the “Day of International Solidarity with the Palestinian People” and supported Barakat’s repudiation of the victorious presidential candidate, Fernando Collor de Mello, due to his remarks against a Palestinian state.100 Meanwhile in the Paraguayan border town that was renamed Ciudad del Este in 1989, Hussein Taigen allegedly gave moral and financial support to the Partido Revolucionario Febrerista, opposed to Paraguay’s crumbling dictatorship. Yet he chose not to run for city council when elections were held after the military coup due to the fact that the regime’s official Colorado Party stayed in power. Around this time, Taigen and other Lebanese from the Paraguayan side of the border were regularly featured in the aforementioned news coverage of the marches and rallies for Palestinian liberation held in Foz do Iguacu. Whether feigning or showing support for the Colorado Party, Lebanese in Ciudad del Este championed Palestinian self-determination and complied with authoritarian
Paraguayan politics. In protesting for Palestine, Lebanese diasporic activism mitigated both Brazil’s democratic status quo as well as Paraguay’s enduring authoritarianism.

Among Arabs themselves, however, some dissonance emerged between these political stances and economic interests, specifically in response to Israel’s 1992 assassination of Hezbollah’s Secretary General, Abbas al-Musawi. Soon after the Israeli offensive in Lebanon, a local Brazilian newspaper reported that “dozens of commercial establishments of Ciudad del Este in Paraguay and in the neighborhoods of Vila Portes and Jardim Jupira of Foz do Iguaçu closed ... in protest.” “Palestinians” and “various Muslim leaders” were said to have led the commercial protest and called for three days of mourning in a local mosque. Although morally condemning such violence in the homeland, the aforementioned president of Ciudad del Este’s chamber of commerce, Hussein Taigen, also regretted that the protest “diminished the flow of merchandise at a difficult time for storeowners.” Based in a democratic Brazil and an authoritarian Paraguay, Lebanese at the border did not necessarily support protesting against Israel if it undermined business.

Coming as a shock to these commercially minded Lebanese Brazilians and Lebanese Paraguayans a month later, a violent blast occurred in the Argentine capital of Buenos Aires, nearly 1,500 kilometers from the bridge between Puerto Iguazú and Foz do Iguaçu. On March 17th, 1992, a vehicle loaded with 220 pounds of explosives blew apart the five-story Israeli Embassy in the porteño neighborhood of Retiro. Media and state powers quickly focused on a statement issued by the amorphous “Islamic Jihad” in Beirut, taking at face value the claim that their group authored the attack in retribution for Israel’s assassination of Hezbollah’s Secretary-General. Less than ten days after the blast, the Argentine police asked Paraguayan forces to search for “two Arab citizens” (dos ciudadanos árabes) suspected of sympathies for the Islamic Jihad within Ciudad del Este. Claiming their names were withheld due to the secretive nature of the investigation, a Paraguayan news article stated that, “the Arabs who are wanted may be sympathizers of the Islamic Jihad, the pro-Irani terrorist group that claimed authorship of the explosive attack in a statement released in Beirut, according to information compiled by the police forces of Argentina, Paraguay, and Israel.” Backed by Argentina and Israel, Paraguay’s Federal Police chief stated: “In Ciudad del Este, there are people of Arab and Lebanese nationality, and for this reason, we are carrying out secret intelligence work, if by chance there’s a relation....” The same chief revealed that “work is in progress to track Arab and Lebanese citizens in Ciudad del Este.” This profiling of Palestinians and Lebanese in the Paraguayan border town came to be justified by vague suspicions that two Arabs “may hold sympathies” for a group that claimed to plan the attack against the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires. Although the Argentine side of the tríplice fronteira was all but
ignored by Lebanese-led political and economic networks in Brazilian and Paraguayan border towns, the 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy suddenly transformed Argentina into a reference point for this diaspora.

In response, Lebanese in the Ciudad del Este remained silent while their colleague in Foz do Iguaçu, Mohamed Barakat, issued a bold statement. As a substitute member of the city council speaking to a local Brazilian newspaper, Barakat characterized Israel as “anti-human” and “racist,” and condemned the violence that it sponsors in Palestinian streets and homes for more than 50 years. In focusing on Israel’s assassination of the Secretary-General of Hezbollah and its victimization of Arab civilians, Barakat’s lack of empathy for the victims of the bombing is palpable, but the real targets of his criticism were three Brazilian governors who previously condemned the attack against the Israeli embassy in Argentina. Barakat criticized these Brazilian leaders who “never took a stand against the acts of barbarism practiced by Zionists. If in some moment they had done so, we could even accept the collective statement signed by these governors. But no, when massacres happened to the Palestinian people, they were silent.” Voiced by a Lebanese Brazilian politician in Foz do Iguaçu, this diasporic critique of Zionism and three Brazilian governors were part of the uneven dawn of the tri-border’s democratic order. In failing to address the concurrent profiling of Arabs in Ciudad del Este, Barakat inflected Brazil’s political rise that entailed democratizing within its own borders as well as acquiescing to the authoritarian status quo in Paraguay.

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

The still unresolved 1992 bombing of the Israeli embassy in the Argentine capital of Buenos Aires is the moment where this work ends and where most writings about Arabs at the tri-border begin. Since two of my recent articles address the victimization of these migrants at the tri-border during the 1990s as well as their post-9/11 mobilizations, suffice it to conclude that the much longer history of Lebanese commercial and associational networks as well as their engagement with South American state powers recounted here is nearly absent in popular and scholarly representations of “Arabs at the tri-border.” Disturbing and predictable, Arabs in the Americas are today denied any past other than that marked by counterterrorist claims.

Writing about Muslim diasporas at the start of the war on terror, Engseng Ho surmised that the task to fill a void in knowledge about “non-Western” societies begun by Eric Wolf’s *Europe and the People Without History* decades earlier remained incomplete. Now with the passing of the ten-year anniversary of 9/11, there is an equal urgency to fill such a gap. Drawing upon archival and ethnographic research from Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina, this article excavated the half-century-long presence of Muslim
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Lebanese at the tri-border. I showed how their diasporic trade and activism are key to the reimagining of the homeland as well as the remaking of the places their far-flung networks reached. To recount the history of Lebanese businessmen and politicos at the tri-border is to chart the geopolitical rise of Brazil over the once Argentine-dominated Paraguay and reordering of South American inter-state relations in the second half of the twentieth century. In this way, my work builds on what Arjun Appadurai calls a “new architecture of area studies,” envisioning South America not in terms of given or fixed boundaries but rather through a diaspora’s economic and political histories.
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3 Brubaker, “The ‘diaspora’ diaspora,” 5.


16 See: José Maria de Brito, *Descoberta de Foz do Iguaçu e Fundação da Colônia Militar* (Curitiba: Travessa dos Editores, 2005 [1907]).


Jackson “Os árabes da fronteira,” 12.


Isaac Rojas, *Intereses argentinos en la Cuenca del Plata* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Libera, 1969). Around this time, Argentina’s largest newspaper, Clarín, featured a series of reports on “Puerto Iguazú” that presents this northeastern corner of Argentina as undeveloped, not only compared to other parts of Argentina, but especially in relation to the Brazilian and Paraguayan sides of the tri-border. See: “Por la Ruta de Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca,” Clarín, June 1968.

In response, the Argentine state did not strengthen the infrastructure in the then sparcely populated Puerto Iguazú in the country’s northeast, but rather planned a new highway from Buenos Aires to Clorinda, a city in the northwest, bordering on Paraguay’s capital of Asunción.

With roughly five-hundred meters, the bridge was constructed by Brazil’s Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional de Volta Redonda, including the giant metalic arcs that define the bridge, as well as 14,000 tons of cement, 3,000 tons of iron, 60 tons of nails and screws. “Ponte da Amizade: 25 anos unindo Brasil e Paraguai,” *A Gazeta do Iguacu*, 28 March 1990, 4.


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48 Baer and Birch, “The International Economic Relations of a Small Country,” 604


51 Lower prices often meant that the products were cheap imitations. See: “Ciudad Puerto Stroessner: O paraíso das falsificações e da corrupção, Nosso Tempo, 20 December 1984.


57 Rabossi, Nas ruas de Ciudad del Este.


59 “Pacote de medidas do novo governo gera expectativas na fronteira,” A Gazeta do Iguaçu, 14 March 1990, 16.


63 Werner Baer, The Brazilian Economy: Growth and Development (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 76, 187.


65 Menezes, La Herencia de Stroessner, 19, 37.


67 This was not the first attempt to name a street in honor of Arabs in Foz do Iguaçu. In 1974, a bill was proposed to rename another street, Rua República Árabe Unida (United Arab Republic Street), after the short-lived polity formed by Egypt and Syria. See: “Anteprojeto de Lei No. 28/1974,” Arquivo of the Câmara Municipal de Foz do Iguaçu.


70 “Lela, a cidade irmã no Mediterrâneo,” A Gazeta do Iguaçu, 26 August 1990, 8.


74 Ibid.


79 “A comunidade Árabe de Foz do Iguaçu,” Nosso Tempo, 5 May 1981, 6; “‘Estou com todo e qualquer movimento de libertação,’ entrevista com Mohamed

80 Menezes, *La Herencia de Stroessner*, 64, 69.


82 Associação dos Diplomados da Escola Superior de Guerra (ADESG), *A Região de Foz do Iguaçu*.


84 “Pregação revolucionária em Foz do Iguaçu,” *Nosso Tempo*, 1 July 1981, 8.

85 *Nosso Tempo* noted that while Arabs in Brazilian and Paraguayan border towns debated passionately about politics in the Arab world, “they are reluctant to speak” about military-ruled South America. See: “A comunidade Árabe de Foz do Iguaçu,” *Nosso Tempo*, 5 May 1981, 6.


89 “Entrevista com o Embaixador do Irã: A República Islâmica do Irã é um exemplo para o mundo,” *Nosso Tempo*, 26 July 1984, 10-12; “Sociedade Beneficente Islâmica de Foz do Iguaçu, Culto Religioso, em nome de Deus,


97 Aside from shipping routes, there is no bridge between Puerto Iguazú and Ciudad Presidente Stroessner. Located four hours away by car, the Argentine border city of Posadas and the Paraguayan city of Encarnación are connected by the bridge over the Paraná River.


102 Ibid.


105 “Buscan aquí a simpatizantes de terroristas que volaron la Embajada israelí: Son árabes y viven en Ciudad del Este,” ABC Color, 26 March 1992, 1, 11.


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