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Reinventing our understanding of the Left-Right political dichotomy: the case of Argentina

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For Argentina, may democracy never leave you.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: The Left-Right Political Dichotomy

The Left-Right (LR) dichotomy is a form of political identification that has long been utilized as the foundational framework for nearly all analyses relating to voter, party, and national political associations. Since its inception after the French Revolution, this labeling mechanism has operated on both systemic and individual levels.[1] As it relates to the former, the Left-Right divide forms a code of communication between politicians, mass media and voters; in terms of the individual, the split is an instrument to help voters understand the political realm.[2] This label serves to orient citizens and guide them through a mix of political messages, help them identify players and parts, and shape their electoral choices.[3] The simplification enabled by the Left-Right divide has a cognitive usefulness in that it reduces the complexity found in democratic systems to a basic and more manageable descriptive alternative.[4]

Even though this labeling has provided political scientists with an analytical model that can be applied to multiple countries and peoples across time and space, there is a lack of flexibility when it comes using these terms in academia on a more contextual level. This means that although the Left-Right dimension is both globally recognized and utilized, it often does not accurately represent the political realities of countries where ideological alignments are fluid and unconcerned with LR distinctions. Drawing upon historical evaluations of this associative mechanism, this chapter explores the various manifestations, meanings, and changes of the LR dichotomy, and its inapplicability in explaining populism.

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[1] Andre Freire and Kats Kivistik,, "Western and non-Western meanings of the Left–Right divide across four continents," *Journal of Political Ideologies,* (June 2013). 10.1080/13569317.2013.784009
[2] Ibid.
[3] Guillermo Rico and M. Kent Jennings, "The Formation of Left-Right Identification: Pathways and Correlates of Parental Influence," *Political Psychology,* (February 16, 2015). https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12243
[4] Ana Rita Ferreira and Joao Cardoso Rosas, *Left and Right: The Great Dichotomy Revisited*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing (November 1, 2013).

Political positions and preferences are frequently expressed in left/right terms.[5] This can be seen in the realm of politics, mass media, and casual everyday interactions. However, the normalization of this descriptive device should not be mistaken for innateness. Even though it seems consistent throughout history, the Left-Right divide has undergone various changes since its founding. The origins of the LR distinction can be traced back to the political positions held by the various constituencies of the National Constituent Assembly in Paris in July 1789; those that were sitting to the right of the presidency represented the interests of the aristocracy and parts of the clergy concerned with upholding their status quo.[6] Those sitting to the left included republicans, liberal, democrats, and monarchists that to various degrees, advocated a profound change of regime.[7] Since then, the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity have become icons of the left that oppose authority, hierarchy, and obedience.[8] Over time, the label took on new forms and adapted mainly on the basis and whims of Global-North debates. Even though here is little consensus on the universal meaning of this dichotomy, there are certain main concepts and ideas that can be found in the sphere of political theory regarding the topic.

Norberto Bobbio provides a study of the divide that is continuously referenced in LR dichotomic-centered literature. Bobbio's central claim is that the two sides of the dichotomy can be distinguished because of their different attitudes towards the value of "equality."[9] He points out that the Left strives for greater equality and that the Right legitimizes inequality.[10] His work thus seeks to

prove that the Left often challenges status quo conditions to ensure greater equal access for all while the Right accepts the fact that inequality is heavily intertwined with existing political, economic, and social structures. Moreover, Bobbio explains that the further to the Left one goes, the more individuals tend to view human beings as fundamentally similar and deserving of equal treatment, whereas the further to the Right one goes, the more difference is emphasized.[11] Politics are subsequently framed through a lens of inclusion and acceptance of differences in relation to seeking equality. Empirical studies show that individuals tend to place themselves, parties, and politics along a left-right spectrum according to this "equality criterion."[12]

However, not all agree with Bobbio's standards of measurement. Some argue that the LR cleavage goes beyond mere equality. Ruish et al. claim that the animosity between those on the left and right stems largely from the deep-seated differences in values, worldviews, and culture that characterize those of opposing ideologies.[13] Lep and Kirbiš find that the left-right dimension contains two interrelated concepts, namely change vs. stability and rejection vs. acceptance of inequality.[14] These interpretations aim to add layers of complexity to the divide and demonstrate that debates regarding political identification stretch past conversations surrounding equality. Others state that Left/Right have no immutable or essential meanings, that they are orientational metaphors which enable identification of subjects in relation to each other and the whole.[15] Following this line of thinking, the labels are then rendered useless outside of their antithetical relationship and fall

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[11] Peter Christoffer Espersen, "The Left-Right Dichotomy in Contemporary Democratic Theory," *Doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia*, (October 21, 2020). https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/id/eprint/77385/1/2019EspersenPCPhD.pdf
[12] Ana Rita Ferreira and Joao Cardoso Rosas, *Left and Right: The Great Dichotomy Revisited,* Cambridge Scholars Publishing (November 1, 2013).
[13] Benjamin Coe Ruisch, Courtney Moore, Javier Granados Samayoa, Shelby Boggs, Jesse Ladanyi, Russell Fazio, "Examining the Left-Right Divide Through the Lens of a Global Crisis: Ideological Differences and Their Implications for Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Political Psychology*, (May 5, 2021). https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12740
[14] Žan Lep and Andrej Kirbiš, "Political orientation in youth beyond the left-right divide: testing a three-factor model of political orientation and its relatedness to personal values," *Journal of Youth Studies*, (June 10, 2021). https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2021.1939285
[15] Peter Christoffer Espersen, "The Left-Right Dichotomy in Contemporary Democratic Theory," *Doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia,* (October 21, 2020). https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/id/eprint/77385/1/2019EspersenPCPhD.pdf

short when it comes to describing the complex nature of political realities. Charbonneau agrees with this analysis and adds that "to describe the evolution of the Left and of the Right is to trace the curve of their respective self-betrayals."[16] The latter can be described as a disillusioned examination of the Left and the Right wherein the two forces have failed their fundamental tenets and hence become virtually purposeless.

It is critical to note that the research above is mainly concerned with the political realities of Europe and the US. Even though there has been a consistent push for a global narrative surrounding notions of the left and the right, systems of governance and self/party-identifications are incredibly fluid and thus often bypass the rigidity of the traditional divide. Because of this, certain nations do not fit under the LR mold, at least as it is conceptualized historically. In most countries across the globe, other political dimensions seem to influence politics more strongly than Left and Right.[17] Additionally, studies show that the dichotomy deviates significantly not only from political agendas of the parties but also the perceptions of individuals.[18] Society is far more complex than this binomial separation. In order to better utilize the LR division as a standard for politics, one must recognize that left and right do not operate invariantly across political contexts, nor are their contents invariant across time.[19] This logic can be extended to address inaccurate analyses of Global South (GS) communities. The LR model is oftentimes not enough to reflect the various changes political cultures in this region have undergone.

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[16] Alain de Benoist, "End of the Left-Right Dichotomy: The French Case," *Telos*, (December 21, 1995). http://alaindebenoist.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/end_of_the_left-right.pdf

[17] Detlef Jahn, "Conceptualizing Left and Right in comparative politics: Towards a deductive approach," (December 20, 2009). DOI: 10.1177/1354068810380091

[18] Žan Lep and Andrej Kirbiš, "Political orientation in youth beyond the left-right divide: testing a three-factor model of political orientation and its relatedness to personal values," *Journal of Youth Studies,* (June, 2021). https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2021.1939285

[19] Gian Vittorio Caprara and Michele Vecchione, "On the Left and Right Ideological Divide: Historical Accounts and Contemporary Perspectives," *Political Psychology*, (February 13, 2018). https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12476

The aforementioned can be observed in Latin America, an incredibly complex and multidimensional region that is often evaluated through a lens that pushes a narrative of assumed homogeneity. This is apparent in the realm of LR assessments and took place as Latin America's "pink wave" engulfed the region. During this time, research focused heavily upon the continent's return to leftist politics by assuming that each Latin American leader on the left represented a piece of the same monolithic umbrella.[20] Most evaluations of Latin American leftist politics were, therefore, based on a faulty assumption of regional uniformity. In reality, the LR divide is not as straightforward as these academic studies presented it to be. Left-right attitudes in the continent are fluid and vary across individuals and contexts.[21]

One of them relates to clientelism and its prevalence in Latin American politics.[22] Studies have demonstrated that clientelism may hinder an individual from developing consistent political perceptions either by encouraging indifference toward the ideological left-right spectrum or by increasing uncertainty in the political realm.[23] Clientelism separates the general public from the sphere of politics and political influence, encouraging a move away from political institutions as these become tainted by corruption. A political party's emphasis on clientelistic practices decreases the coherence of voters' left-right orientation with respect to their democratic values as well as their economic representation.[24] Because of this, in nations where clientelism is the norm—as it relates to political power diffusion and consolidation—associations with the left and the right are muddled.

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[20] Nina Wiesehomeier, "The Meaning of Left-Right in Latin America: A Comparative View," *Kellogg Institute for International Studies,* (July 2010). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/370_0.pdf

[21] Saskia P. Ruth, "Clientelism and the Utility of the Left-Right Dimension in Latin America," *Latin American Politics and Society* 58, no. 1 (2016): 72–97. doi:10.1111/j.1548-2456.2016.00300.x.

[22] "Clientelism refers to a system in which politicians, mostly through party machine operatives, offer goods, services, or jobs to citizens with the expectation that these clients will return the favor with some form of political support." Joby Schaffer and Andy Baker, "Clientelism as Persuasion-Buying: Evidence from Latin America," *Comparative Political Studies, 48(9),* (March 2015), https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414015574881.

[23] Saskia P. Ruth, "Clientelism and the Utility of the Left-Right Dimension in Latin America," (2016).

[24] Ibid.

Even though this line of thinking may shed some light onto the political realities of Latin American communities, this alone does not explain why LR centered studies can, at times, produce monolithic analyses of the region. Clientelism is not inherently unique to Latin America. Jaffe and Koster find that due to the way the phenomenon is framed and discussed in the Global North, many practices in North America and Europe are not evaluated as clientelism even when they meet clientelistic definitional standards.[25] The aforementioned can be observed in the realm of urban development as the "myth of Northern formality" has allowed activities and connections that would generally be framed as clientelist or corrupt in the Global South to be rebranded as policy innovation in Western Europe and North America.[26] This ethnographic study highlights two critical points: a) clientelism is not innately found on the basis of geographical location, and b) Global North conceptualizations of issues are, at times, not even reflective of GN realities. Clientelistic relationships in Latin America only tell a small part of the broader political narrative. Political realities are heterogenous across time-space and differ on various contextual levels—national, community, individual. This is especially true in places where populism has been injected into mainstream politics.

Populism: a quick overview

Populism as a concept is widely contested. As the number of populist leaders and parties in power continues to increase, scholars and academics have failed to establish a structured definition of what it means to be populist. Many consider it to be a thin-centered ideology while others have moved beyond this approach and study the phenomenon through a lens that takes into account that the traditional binary between "the elite" and "the people" is not as straightforward as some

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[25] Rivke Jaffe and Martijn Koster, "The Myth of Formality in the Global North: Informality-as-Innovation in Dutch Governance," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* (January 2019), DOI:10.1111/1468-2427.12706
[26] Ibid.

perceive it to be. Populism can be evaluated as an ideology, a strategy, a style, a form of political discourse; below is a delineation of some of the main approaches.

Lisa Zanotti studies populism in Italy and considers the movement to be a "thin ideology that conceives society ultimately divided into two homogeneous groups the 'pure' people vs. the 'corrupt' elite, and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people."[27] For her, populism represents a simplified and immediate method of reconnecting voters to a political environment in the aftermath of traditional party system collapse.[28] Even though her analysis of party system collapse holds great value and deserves further study, labeling populism as "thin-centered" has been heavily challenged in recent years. Many who mark populism as thin do so as a way to highlight the latter's incapacity to provide fleshed-out and extensive plans for society, as populist rhetoric is heavily contingent upon emotional messaging that encourages division across various political, social, and economic lines. Thin-centered ideologies present structural inability to offer complex ranges of argument because many chains of ideas are simply absent; a thin-centered-ideology is hence limited in ideational ambitions and scope.[29] Despite the fact that many populist movements do not present structured ideas—and rather rely on emotion-based messages to incite support—this labeling of thinness does not seem to be applicable anymore, as it makes studies of populism rather weak in terms of range.

The author who coined the term, Michael Freeden, has recently countered populist literature's constant use of the label. He argues that populism is not a thin-centered ideology for this term implies that there is potentially more than the center when in reality the populist core is all

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[27] Lisa Zanotti, "How's Life After the Collapse? Populism as a Representation Linkage and the Emergence of a Populist/Anti-Populist Political Divide in Italy (1994–2018)," *Frontiers in Political Science*, (July 6 2021). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.679968

[28] "A collapse is the result of the incapacity of most of the parties in the system to fulfill their basic function, i.e., to represent voters' interests," Ibid.

[29] Davide Vittori, "Re-Conceptualizing Populism: Bringing a Multifaceted Concept within Stricter Borders," *Revista Española De Ciencia Política* no. 44 (07, 2017): 43-65. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/re-conceptualizing-populism-bringing-multifaceted/docview/1953099288/se-2?accountid=8361.

there is.[30] He states that populism is "simply ideologically too scrawny even to be thin."[31] Nothing

can be built upon the core of populism as there is little to no ideological foundation for plans or

strategies to stand upon it; populism is continuously shifting, it does not adhere to singular concepts

or ideas. As Freeden states: populism emphasizes only those items on which it wishes to mobilize

public opinion and ignores the rest.[32] So is populism an ideology? Freedmen, and other scholars, do

not view it as such. "Vagueness and indeterminacy" render it as something other.[33] This ghost-like

mode of mobilization and governance—in its evasion of traditional academic standards—should

thus be evaluated differently. Contemporary academics of populism have brought forth many

alternatives.

Benjamin Moffit, in his study of Western European populism, argues that the latter is "a

political style that features an appeal to 'the people' versus 'the elite', 'bad manners' and the

performance of crisis, breakdown or threat."[34] This approach encompasses the distinction between

the two categorical identities, the people and the elite, the in-group and the out-group, and how

these classifications are formed. It highlights the different norms and behaviors that make up each

category as "bad" manners refer to populism's usurpation of accepted decorum and established

political norms. Extending this argument beyond the label of "style," Kurt Weyland classifies

populism as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government

power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly

unorganized followers.[35] Drawing upon the presented arguments and approaches one can thus

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[30] Benjamin Moffitt, "The Populism/Anti-Populism Divide in Western Europe," *Democratic Theory*, (December 2018), DOI:10.3167/dt.2018.050202

[31] Michael Freeden, "After the Brexit referendum: revisiting populism as an ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, (December 2016). https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2016.1260813

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Benjamin Moffitt, "The Populism/Anti-Populism Divide in Western Europe," *Democratic Theory*, (December 2018), DOI:10.3167/dt.2018.050202

[35] Ibid.

understand populism as a game of morphing definitions and antithetical narrative creation. The different binaries, those of the people and the elite, can be anyone or anything at any point in time. Power lies with the individual or party that can control the creation of political narratives. Populism is reliant upon division, personalism, the collapse of traditional party systems, and crises—of the state and of cultural identity.

Latin America and populism

Latin America has had a long and complicated history with populist rule, one marked by repression, economic stagnation, and the stripping away of civil rights. Democracies and democratic institutions have slowly suffocated under the grasp of populist leaders that have done near irreversible damage to several nations across the region. Through the creation of a clear—yet also disarmingly adaptive—dichotomy of "us vs them," populist rhetoric enables the inclusion of certain groups through the exclusion of others. It usually promises equity for those in lower income brackets at the expense of the oligarchy and the traditional elite, and draws most of its legitimacy from the "people" rather than the rule of law.[36] Because of this, once in office populist leaders can dismantle democratic institutions as they answer to no one other than their party (and often their own interests), and feel no allegiance to the democratic systems that put them in office.

Waves of populism are nearly universal for at their very core, the messages and goals created by populists can virtually adapt to any political context, regardless of where the party/leader may fall on the LR political spectrum. It is not an ideology and holds no loyalty to either side of the political spectrum; it a method of conveying messages which are reliant upon the constant polarization of society. Democracies in Latin America no longer perish at the hands of a traditional military coups but rather decay slowly through the erosion of democratic institutions.

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[36] Cachanosky, Nicolás and Alexandre Padilla, "Latin American Populism in the Twenty-First Century," *The Independent Review* 24, no. 2 (Fall, 2019): 209-226. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/latin-american-populism-twenty-first-century/docview/2333941897/se-2?accountid=8361.

Populism fundamentally alters political cultures and moves beyond traditional conceptualizations of the left and the right. It is ideologically scrawny, meaning it does not adhere to potential LR categorization; it is a malleable strategy and has the ability to change the very essence of political environments. As explained by Zanotti, a new dimension of political competition based on the contraposition between populism and anti-populism emerges in post-system collapse contexts.[37] Her study of Italy can be applied to countries that have undergone similar post-collapse changes due to populism, particularly in Latin American nations. Zanotti's evaluation lays the foundation for the following chapter.

The relevance of the left-right dimension has traditionally been dismissed by students of politics in Latin American countries, where it has been supposed that political parties are not strongly ideological oriented, but rather populist, personalistic and clientelistic.[38] Moreover, Latin America appears to lack classic liberal parties and additionally contain a breed of anti-liberal parties and presidents which/who are right on social policy yet left on economics.[39] How does one account for these paradoxical disparities? By digging deeper into historical and status quo conditions of democratic saliency.

The LR divide cannot be accurately utilized in nations where ideological divisions are not truly made on the basis of the left and right. Even though Latin American parties utilize titles of left and right, these pledges to a specific side of the dichotomy alone do not truly explain the region's various political environments. This is especially true in the case of Argentina. To understand Argentina, and the ways in which her democracy functions (or doesn't), one must understand the

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[37] Lisa Zanotti, "How's Life After the Collapse? Populism as a Representation Linkage and the Emergence of a Populist/Anti-Populist Political Divide in Italy (1994–2018)," *Frontiers in Political Science,* (July 6 2021). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.679968

[38] Joseph Colmer, "The Left-Right Dimension in Latin America," SSRN Electronic Journal, (March 2005). https://www.researchgate.net/publication/23695583_The_Left-Right_Dimension_in_Latin_America

[39] Nina Wiesehomeier, "The Meaning of Left-Right in Latin America: A Comparative View," Kellogg Institute for International Studies, (July 2010). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/370_0.pdf

history and contemporaneous manifestations of populism and anti-populism. To categorize

Argentina as either a country of the left or the right, at any point in time since 1946, would be to

wholly overlook the makeup and complexity of her political reality.

Chapter Two: A Warped Political Environment

The literature on populism is convoluted at best. A lack of precision and consensus as it relates to standards of measurements and definitions has created an environment wherein academics can barely agree on *how* to study populism, much less on *what* the phenomenon is fundamentally. Chapter One briefly mentions the varying definitions and tools that have been utilized to demarcate what makes a movement, government, or leader "populist." However, populist-based studies face the risk of crumbling from the inside out. Contemporaneously, anything and everything can be labeled as populist without any regards for verified accuracy. Discourse and ambiguity in academia are vital for its maintenance and continued evolution; however, an absence of foundational or accepted frameworks of analyses have led many to label populism as a buzzword. Thus, the problem this project seeks to address is two-fold as 1) the left/right binary has been wrongly operationalized in cases where populist movements, leaders or parties have entered the political theater, and 2) the study of populism itself has conceptually stretched, slowly nearing its breaking point. [40]

Revisiting Chapter One: populism and conceptual stretching

Despite decades of study and the continued growth of self-proclaimed populist leaders, there exists a self-sustaining vacuum in academia wherein near anything can be considered populist.[41] This disjointed and unprecise use of the populist label, and the uncoordinated application of standards of measurement, has often led to inconclusive analyses of populist governments; it has ultimately bred conceptual confusion. The latter prevails when different scholars emphasize divergent attributes as

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[40] Falling into the trap of conceptual stretching means identifying two different phenomena by the same name, or making "pseudo-equivalences" that do not differentiate between phenomena. Levi Marsteintredet and Andrés Malamud, "Coup with Adjectives: Conceptual Stretching or Innovation in Comparative Research?" *Political Studies*, 68(4), (2020). https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719888857

[41] For more see Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford University Press, (2017).

defining characteristics of the same concept.[42] Some scholars conceptualize populism as an ideology; others evaluate it solely as a strategy, while many analyze it through a stylistic lens. The problem of conceptual confusion or stretching is not inherently unique to populism. In fact, it seems to be an endemic issue within the entirety of the social sciences branch. As explained by David Collier and Steven Levitsky in their study of democracies and the definitional debates surrounding the topic: since scholars are concerned with issues of conceptual stretching, there has been a proliferation of alternative conceptual forms of what it means to be a democracy.[43] This has resulted in a surprising number of subtypes involving democracy "with adjectives" such as "authoritarian democracies" or "neopatrimonial democracies."[44] The same can be found in populist literature.

Academics have created subcategories for what they consider to be different strands of the same populist nucleus. Consequently, a range of labels have been attached to the title of populism itself including: false, political, economic, authoritarian, left-wing, right-wing, inclusionary, exclusionary. The list is virtually endless. And it unfortunately does not get anyone far. Within these distinctions—all based on different cases and which use different definitional bases—there is little to no agreement on the overall definition of what it means to be populist. This is problematic since the enterprise of comparative politics depends upon the formation of clearly defined concepts and is threatened by conceptual stretching.[45]

The aforementioned refers to instances where scholars expand their comparative perspective and tend to broaden the meaning of a concept to be able to incorporate under its expanded rubric

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[42] Kurt Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin America," *Comparative Politics*, 34 (1), (October, 2001). https://www.jstor.org/stable/422412
[43] David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics*, (1997). https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/levitsky/files/SL_democracy-adjectives.pdf
[44] David Collier and Steven Levitsky, "Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparative Research," *World Politics*, (1997). https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/levitsky/files/SL_democracy-adjectives.pdf
[45] Sophia Hunger and Fred Paxton, "What's in a buzzword? A systematic review of the state of populism research in political science," *Political Science Research and Methods*, (2021). doi:10.1017/psrm.2021.44

the larger realm of observations.[46] Through this expansion words and titles lose their essence. Sense and connotation disappear and are absorbed into the self-sustaining vacuum. Hence, once reaches the modern populist dilemma: what *is* populism? The cycle appears to be never ending. In order to address the issue, I argue for a definitional re-calibration, a re-visitation of what populism is on a fundamental level; from this center, it may possible to reach better and more precise conclusions on the subject. To do so, it is imperative to evaluate populism as a discursive frame and to apply this standard of measurement to historical and contemporaneous examples (such as Argentina) hand-in-hand with analyses of anti-populist coalitions.

Populism as discursive frame

At its very heart, populism is a game of antithetical definitions, one contingent upon perpetual and/or self-sustaining systems of polarization. Because of this, the foundation of "discursive frame" should be adopted to understand the phenomenon, as this allows for the most nuanced and precise evaluations of populist leaders, movements, coalitions, and governments. Populism as a concept has been housed by a plethora of different approaches. The term has, therefore, been evaluated as an ideology, strategy, discourse or political style.[47] Yet, these divergent structures of knowledge have yielded wildly opposing conclusions, all claiming to apply to the same overarching label of "populism." Assertions—both conclusive and ambiguous—are thus based on exceptionally vague conceptualization of populism; and several authors have warned about the risk of conflating populism with its host ideologies.[48]

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[46] Levi Marsteintredet and Andrés Malamud, "Coup with Adjectives: Conceptual Stretching or Innovation in Comparative Research?" *Political Studies*, 68(4), (2020). https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719888857
[47] Benjamin Moffitt, "The Populism/Anti-Populism Divide in Western Europe," *Democratic Theory,* (December 2018), DOI:10.3167/dt.2018.050202
[48] Sophia Hunger and Fred Paxton, "What's in a buzzword? A systematic review of the state of populism research in political science," *Political Science Research and Methods*, (2021). doi:10.1017/psrm.2021.44

Most scholars defer to Mudde's definition of populism as an ideology that "considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people."[49] There are three core elements to Mudde's typification: the elites, 'the people,' and who should be included and excluded and included in 'the people.'[50] By demarcating the inclusionary and exclusionary facets of various populist leaders and movements, Mudde attempts to differentiate between what are considered right and left-wing populisms. Rightist populisms are exclusionary (often of immigrant populations) while leftist populisms focus on the inclusivity of working-class communities.[51] The latter definition additionally includes and has been further marked by an attachment of thinness as an adjective/descriptor. Mudde borrows from Michael Freeden's study of nationalism and consequently argues that populism is ideologically thin. Accordingly, the phenomenon can be understood as an ideology focused on a single issue or one that appends itself to other ideologies to thicken out; it does not provide comprehensive solutions to most socio-political problems as grand ideologies (like liberalism and socialism) do.[52]

However, even though this approach has been the most utilized by academics in the field, many critique it. Michael Freeden himself has even refuted and revisited academia's tendency to conflate populism with fleshed-out ideologies. According to Freeden, "a thin-centered ideology implies that there is potentially more than the center, but the populist core is all there is; it is not a potential center for something broader or more inclusive."[53] He adds that populism is emaciated

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[49] Sophia Hunger and Fred Paxton, "What's in a buzzword? A systematic review of the state of populism research in political science," *Political Science Research and Methods*, (2021). doi:10.1017/psrm.2021.44

[50] Ralph Schroeder, "The Dangerous Myth of Populism as a Thin Ideology," *Populism,* 3 (1), 13-28 (February, 2020). DOI:10.1163/25888072-02021042

[51] Ralph Schroeder, "The Dangerous Myth of Populism as a Thin Ideology," *Populism, 3 (1)*, 13-28 (February, 2020). DOI:10.1163/25888072-02021042

[52] Carlos de la Torre and Oscar Mazzoleni, "Do we a minimum definition of populism? An appraisal of Mudde's conceptualization," *Populism, 2(1),* 79-95, (2019). DOI:10.1163/25888072-02011021

[53] Michael Freeden, "After the Brexit referendum: revisiting populism as an ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, (December 2016). https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2016.1260813

rather than thin-centered.[54] There is not enough in the populist nucleus to allow for the creation of

an ideological framework. Under populist rule there are no specific plans for society, there are only

vague allusions to a brighter future, a reframing of political decorum and rules, accompanied by a

lack of solid policy proposals. There is no "Populist International," no sacred texts upon which

populist disciples can draw inspiration, no universally revered populist icons, and no acknowledged

historical continuity among populist manifestations.[55] As an ideology populism is a wraith, ever-

changing and ever-moving, with no history or ideological tenets to stand upon.

 Some have additionally pointed that Mudde's definition has led to an overlooking of the

various complexities and critical differences that exist within the populist umbrella. Ernesto Laclau's

work stands in stark opposition to Mudde and is one of the most utilized in relation to moving

beyond the ideological implications of Muddean standards. Laclau argues that what defines

populism is not the ideological content of the demands being put forward, but rather the fact that

those anti-systemic claims are brought together into a counter-hegemonic formation and take a

particular shape.[56] According to the scholar, a movement is not populist because its politics or

ideology present actual contents identifiable as populistic, but because it shows a particular logic of

articulation of those contents—whatever those contents are.[57] To understand populism, one must

look beyond the promises put forward by the populist, and rather examine how these claims are

communicated and performed. Moffit in 2016, examines the performative nature of populist politics

and contends that populism is "a political style that features an appeal to 'the people' versus 'the

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[54] Michael Freeden, "After the Brexit referendum: revisiting populism as an ideology," *Journal of Political Ideologies*, (December 2016). https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2016.1260813

[55] Paris Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies*, 64 (15), (2016). DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12224

[56] Jonathan Dean and Bice Maiguashca, "Did somebody say populism? Towards a renewal and reorientation of populism studies," J*ournal of Political Ideologies, 25 (1)*. pp. 11-27 (2020). https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/150816/

[57] Paris Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies*, 64 (15), (2016). DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12224

elite', 'bad manners' and the performance of crisis, breakdown or threat."[58] Bad manners in this

context refers to the populist tendency to move away from the established decorum generally

expected in politics. He adds: "where the discursive and stylistic approaches [for studying populism]

push the literature forward is that they firstly recognize populism as a gradational rather than binary

category, thus opening up more nuance in the study of populism; and secondly, they take seriously

the role and processes of representation and identity formation under populism, and consequently

the drawing of lines between 'the people' and other political identities."[59] Because of this,

contemporaneous studies on populism are attempting to incorporate such frameworks, though more

must be done.

Many scholars additionally criticize the normative implications of Mudde's definition—

wherein words such as "corrupt" and "pure" are arbitrarily utilized and applied to a range of

different movements. Some believe that this can lead to an overlooking of the potential benefits that

populist discourse provides for the creation of space designed for critiques and appraisals of the

status quo. Academics, such as Mudde, Kaltwasser and Müller, have argued that populists' claim to

represent "the people" and their criticism of "the elite" are inherently anti-pluralist because of an

implied homogenization of "the people."[60] This idea, some attest, ignores how populist parties and

movements can, *at times*, be inclusionary in their normative vision and pluralist in the way they seek

to achieve this normative vision.[61] It is critical to note, however, that this is the exception as opposed

to the rule; the latter rarely happens for one of the main performative pillars of populism is its

dependency upon perpetual polarization. Additionally, populism in power often leads to the shirking

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[58] Benjamin Moffitt, "The Populism/Anti-Populism Divide in Western Europe," *Democratic Theory*, (December 2018), DOI:10.3167/dt.2018.050202

[59] Benjamin Moffitt, "The Populism/Anti-Populism Divide in Western Europe," *Democratic Theory*, (December 2018), DOI:10.3167/dt.2018.050202

[60] See Mudde and Kaltwaser 2017; Müller 2016; Benjamin De Cleen, Jason Glynos and Aurelien Mondon, "Critical research on populism: nine rules of engagement," *Organization 25(5)*, (April 2018). DOI:10.1177/1350508418768053

[61] Benjamin De Cleen, Jason Glynos and Aurelien Mondon, "Critical research on populism: nine rules of engagement," *Organization 25(5)*, (April 2018). DOI:10.1177/1350508418768053

of democratic spaces. Regardless, many contemporaneous academics show that moving away from an ideological understanding of populism can provide scholars with a more nuanced and analytically complex assessments of populism.[62] This is because Mudde's minimal definition inadvertently ignores that populism can fit under the framework of democracy. As argued by Aslandis "portraying populism as ideology swells the scope and purported impact of the phenomenon and forces analysts to take sides in favor of or against it. The normative implications of populism have plagued the literature and crippled its evolution into a respected theory."[63] Critiquing the status quo or the establishment is not innately anti-democratic, in fact the ability to do so is vital for the maintenance and endurance of democracies everywhere. Democratic saliency is contingent upon the model's ability to be fluid and dynamic, to provide citizens with choices, and to ultimately withstand/weather critiques. Populist arguments are not always innately anti-democratic, although the framework often times becomes a stepping stone into democratic backsliding and erosion since it clashes with accountability and the rule of law. Populist leaders are anti-democratic in the ways that they communicate and perform politics before and during their time in office; they are anti-pluralist once they usurp and bypass democratic channels such as checks and balances or the needed separation of powers within government. However, the only way to truly reach this conclusion is by moving away from an ideologically-based understanding of populism and evaluating it as a discursive frame. Populists hold no loyalty to either side of the political spectrum.

Focusing solely on ideology constricts access to knowledge as it obscures the many other elements that makeup how parties or leaders seek to rule a particular population. Mudde's minimal definition does not consider key components of populism such as populist styles of communication

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[62] Benjamin De Cleen, Jason Glynos and Aurelien Mondon, "Critical research on populism: nine rules of engagement," *Organization 25(5)*, (April 2018). DOI:10.1177/1350508418768053
[63] Paris Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies*, 64 (15), (2016). DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12224

and leadership, or its strategies.[64] Parties, leaders, and movements do not attempt to rule solely on an

ideological basis as this is simply not enough to enable mass mobilization. Politics do not merely

exist within the confines of ideology; political clashes are ultimately defined, shaped, and altered by

how ideological claims/statements are framed and presented. Because of this, populism should be

understood as a discursive frame. Borrowing from Aslandis' work, I adhere to the frame-based

structure of knowledge as the better alternative for studying populism.

This re-calibration of the populist definition brings political communication into focus and

underscores its importance in relation to politics and governance. Populist discourse, through this

lens, can be perceived as the systematic dissemination of a frame that diagnoses reality as

problematic because "corrupt elites" have unjustly usurped the sovereign authority of the "noble

people" and maintains that the solution to the problem resides in the righteous political mobilization

of the latter in order to regain power.[65] Populism can be fundamentally boiled down to the ways in

which the antithetical relationship between "the people" and "the elite" is communicated and

performed. Populist framing is just another tool of persuasion in the arsenal of political agents.[66] As

a result, one can observe populist parties, movements and leaders bypassing the

constrictions/limitations presented by ideology. Populism should not, therefore, be linked to a

specific economic system, nor to a crisis of accumulation but should be understood instead as a

resource permanently available to politicians offering sweeping illusions and easy solutions to the

increasingly complex problems of increasingly complex societies.[67] As such, it moves beyond the

left-right political binary for it is simply another form of performance politics; the dichotomy

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[64] Carlos de la Torre and Oscar Mazzoleni, "Do we a minimum definition of populism? An appraisal of Mudde's conceptualization," Populism, 2(1), 79-95, (2019). DOI:10.1163/25888072-02011021

[65] Paris Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies*, 64 (15), (2016). DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12224

[66] Paris Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies*, 64 (15), (2016). DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12224

[67] Celia Szusterman, "Carlos Saúl Menem: variations on the theme of populism," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* 19, (2000) 193-206. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1470-9856.2000.tb00099.x

between "elites" and "people" is not ideologically-based. As theorized by Laclau: "the populist form pits a certain 'people' against a certain 'power bloc', but both subjectivities are 'empty signifiers', symbolic vessels filled with particular content depending on the specifics of the political context within which they are invoked and the cultural toolbox at work."[68]

Populism is a moving target that has evolved with the passage of time. Academia must attempt to capture its essence without being too constricting or conflating. Studying populist rhetoric through the discursive frame allows for this. The discursive frame establishes that a populist logic can be invoked to further very different political goals, from radical left to right, or from progressive to regressive.[69] It recognizes a populist's lack of ties to ideology, and provides space for the incorporation of anti-populism in discussions surrounding populist movements.

Crises and total party collapse

Political environments are intrinsically conditioned by a nation-state's political culture, and vice versa. The latter is defined as the norms and values that relate to a political system, and the particular distributions of patterns of orientation toward political objects among members of the nation.[70] As populism is injected into the political theater, the rules and norms that define a particular environment inherently change. This is not only due to the disruptive nature of populist movements, but additionally caused by the formation of anti-populist coalitions. The dichotomic model presented by populism—that of the us vs. them—is replicated by those who wish to take a stand against populists, and often leads to further political polarization. This stark divide warps the

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[68] See Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason,* London: Verso (2005a) and Ernesto Laclau "Populism: What's in a Name?" *Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, 32-49. (2005b); Paris Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies*, 64 (15), (2016). DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12224

[69] Benjamin De Cleen, Jason Glynos and Aurelien Mondon, "Critical research on populism: nine rules of engagement," *Organization 25(5)*, (April 2018). DOI:10.1177/1350508418768053

[70] Mehran Kamrava, "Political Culture and a New Definition of the Third World," *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1995): 691–701. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3993172.

political realities of a nation for political clashes are consequently no longer framed around traditional ideological divides but rather on the basis of populist vs anti-populist.

Despite the continuous progress done in this field, comparatively little analysis has been done on anti-populism. As explained by Joan Miro in 2018, "the one aspect that has gone unnoticed in this intellectual crusade has been the political discourse articulated by non-populist political actors to counter populist irruptions."[71] This lack of research on the subject has left analyses of populism to be both inconclusive and incomplete for one cannot truly evaluate populism without studying its counterpart. The populism/anti-populism frontier is first determined by the appearance of populist rhetoric and movements into mainstream political discourses. Populism is not born out of thin air; rather, the phenomenon should be understood as the ramification of constant failures, real and imagined, within political ecosystems. Anti-populism, on the other hand, can be studied as the response of the failing system to account for past mistakes, and essentially an attempt to salvage existing political infrastructure.

As explained by Lisa Zanotti, the populist/anti-populist divide is born out of "party system collapse."[72] In her analysis of this split in Italy, Zanotti describes a collapse as the result of the incapacity of most of the parties in the political system to fulfill their basic function of representing voters' interests.[73] After presenting a detailed study of the Italian party system collapse in 1994 and its consequences, Zanotti includes examples that extend beyond European borders. She explains that after the collapse of their respective political systems, Argentina, Bolivia, Peru and Venezuela experienced the emergence of a new cleavage between those for and those against populist leaders.[74]

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[71] Joan Miro," Beyond populism and institutionalism: Anti-populism and the management of austerity in Spain," *Constellations,* Volume 26, (November 16 2018). https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-8675.12386
[72] Lisa Zanotti, "How's Life After the Collapse? Populism as a Representation Linkage and the Emergence of a Populist/Anti-Populist Political Divide in Italy (1994–2018)," *Frontiers in Political Science*, (July 6 2021). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.679968
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

This alteration, caused by a new form of political competition, stemmed from a series of crises that further separated the people from the institutions meant to protect them. If political movements fail their constituents in this regard, voters will start to look for options outside of the limits demarcated by traditional party alliances. Disappointment within political environments can often lead to feelings of detachment by voters and can create the appeal for antiestablishment parties; this is where populist leaders come in. Populist rhetoric diffuses more quickly if dissatisfaction with the political system as a whole has corroded people's confidence in established parties and leaders. In these cases, an usurpation of political norms and expectations of decorum are welcomed. Crises—natural and imagined—play a critical role in perpetuating institution-based disillusionment and crisis creation/manipulation is both an internal and external condition of populism.

Populist narrative creation is contingent upon the existence and perpetuation of crises. This category can entail an array of conditions: economic, cultural, political, social. Populism's emergence has been historically linked to a crisis of the dominant ideological discourse, which in turn is part of a more general social crisis.[75] Issues within the ideological sphere essentially morph into critiques of the overall societal apparatus; to study this phenomenon, one must utilize the aforementioned discursive frame. This is because, as explained by Galanopoulos and Venizelos in 2021, populists construct discursively and maintain a situation of crisis for political benefit.[76] Crisis is both a catalyst and an effect of populism. Crises do not just trigger populism, populism also attempts to act as a trigger for crisis as the latter are always mediated and performed.[77] Many scholars contend that prominent populist figures would not have emerged had it not been for the existence and

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[75] Yannis Stavrakaks, Giorgos Katsambekis, Alexandros Kioupkiolis, Nikos Nikisianis and Thomas Siomos, "Populism, anti-populism and crisis," *Contemporary Political Theory*, Vol. 17, (August 2, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-017-0142-y

[76] Antonis Galanopoulos and Giorgos Venizelos, "Anti-populism and Populist Hype During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Representation,* (December 2021). DOI:10.1080/00344893.2021.2017334

[77] Benjamin Moffit, "How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism," *Government and Opposition*, 50 (2) (2015). doi:10.1017/gov.2014.13

propagation of crises. In the case of Argentina, without the progressive erosion of the oligarchical system of the 1930s, the rise of Juan Perón would have been unthinkable.[78] The same logic can be applied to contemporary forms of populism. Alberto Fernandez, Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, Jair Bolsonaro, these are all leaders that could not have gained popular support without national crises of identity. And even though each figure provides a different manifestation of populist politics, narrative creation contingent upon real/imagined threats was critical for their rise to power.

The importance of crises is two-fold, one the one hand they can act as a trigger for the injection of populist rhetoric into mainstream politics; on the other, populist parties, leaders and movements oftentimes construct imagined crises as a means for gaining and maintaining power. These imagined threats can include anything from the villainization of out-groups or marginalized communities, the discrediting of external international systems, and the slandering of democratic institutions. Moffit delineates six steps in the "performance" of crisis that populist leaders undergo: 1) identity failure, 2) elevate to the level of crisis by linking into a wider framework and adding a temporal dimension, 3) frame 'the people' vs. those responsible for the crisis, 4) use media to propagate performance, 5) present simple solutions and strong leadership, and 6) continue to propagate crisis.[79] This is the strategy utilized by populist leaders to exert control over political systems; the question then becomes: how does the system respond to the populist attacks?

Including anti-populism in the study of populism

Once populism politics become mainstream, backlash can be felt throughout the political theater. This counter-attack against populist rhetoric oftentimes takes the form of anti-populist coalitions. Even though their existence is not novel, little attention and energy has been spent

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[78] Benjamin Moffit, "How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism," *Government and Opposition*, 50 (2) (2015). doi:10.1017/gov.2014.13
[79] Benjamin Moffit, "How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism," *Government and Opposition*, 50 (2) (2015). doi:10.1017/gov.2014.13

attempting to figure out how the relationship between populism and anti-populism affects a nation's political culture. Most available analyses of populism ultimately fail to take into account the wider hegemonic environment within which populist actors have to operate.[80] Populism does not exist isolated from the rest of society; this form of political performance interacts, clashes and cooperates with other movements, leaders, and parties. Because of this, anti-populism should be more thoroughly examined. This paper argues for the continued study of anti-populism in relation to populism, and further contends that this particular political clash—which can stretch across time-space, often bleeding into contemporary debates—bypasses traditional conceptualizations of on the basis of either left or right (as presented by the LR dichotomy).

Anti-populism as a concept faces the same definitional challenges as populism and is accompanied by a comparatively miniscule body of literature from which to pull. The way anti-populism is presented and analyzed (in the rare chance that it is studied) shifts depending on the school of thought that one subscribes to regarding the dangers posed by populist rhetoric. For some, those who see the value to be found within the criticisms presented by populism, anti-populism is an elitist movement tainted by reactionary biases. Through this lens, anti-populism is primarily characterized by its profound aversion to populism, its indiscriminate usage of the term, and its reinforcement of the negative consequences of the phenomenon.[81] Because of this, anti-populism has oftentimes been marked by its elitist tendencies to overly defend the status quo. Anti-populists have been found to identify challenges to "centrist" political positions as extreme, or flirting with authoritarianism.[82] It is important to note, however, that these assessments generally

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[80] Yannis Stavrakaks, Giorgos Katsambekis, Alexandros Kioupkiolis, Nikos Nikisianis and Thomas Siomos, "Populism, anti-populism and crisis," *Contemporary Political Theory*, Vol. 17, (August 2, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-017-0142-y

[81] Antonis Galanopoulos and Giorgos Venizelos, "Anti-populism and Populist Hype During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Representation,* (December 2021). DOI:10.1080/00344893.2021.2017334

[82] Robert Howse, *Epilogue: In defense of disruptive democracy—A critique of anti-populism*, Oxford University Press and New York University School of Law, (2019). doi:10.1093/icon/moz051

stem from Western European or North American evaluations. And although anti-populist coalitions can house elite elements or individuals, anti-populist coalitions predominantly form in the defense of neoliberal democracy. Whether that system is worth defending is not within the scope of this paper.

For others, anti-populism represents those forces wishing to maintain and uphold democratic ideals during a time where democratic institutions are under fire. Ostiguy in 2017, defines both populism and anti-populism in terms of opposition between the "low" and "high," where the "low" is associated with the populist tendency to personalism and coarseness, and is in direct opposition to the "high," often represented by the traditional parties, which claim to support institutions, legal procedures and proper manners [83] Ostiguy's approach is useful in that it carries little normative baggage, and makes clear that populism as well as anti-populism do not automatically reside on a particular side of the ideological spectrum.[84] Under this, definition anti-populism is seen as adhering to the norms and behaviors expected of those within traditional political theaters. "High" and "low" are incredibly malleable and dynamic signifiers; they fit cultural contexts and mold in accordance to specific moments in time. Many have tried to reconstruct the debate around the elitist undertones of anti-populism by pointing to bottoms-up anti-populist coalitions. An example of the this can be found in the Sardine movement. The Italian Sardine Movement emerged as a reaction to the populism of the Lega, a radical party led by Matteo Salvini of Italy.[85] In her study of the latter, Soraya Hamdaoui demonstrates how the movement stems from the Italian people's efforts as a response to the inability by Italian political parties to successfully vocalize anti-populist sentiment. The Sardine's anti-populist stylistic approach is three-pronged and

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[83] See Ostiguy 2017 and Moffit 2018; Massimiliano Demata, Michelangelo Conoscenti, and Yannis Stavrakakis, "Riding the Populist Wave Metaphors of Populism and Anti-Populism in the Daily Mail and The Guardian," *Iperstoria*, (2020). DOI: https://doi.org/10.13136/2281-4582/2020.i15.686

[84] Benjamin Moffitt, "The Populism/Anti-Populism Divide in Western Europe," *Democratic Theory*, (December 2018), DOI:10.3167/dt.2018.050202

[85] Soraya Hamdaoui, "A "stylistic anti-populism": an analysis of the Sardine movement's opposition to Matteo Salvini in Italy," *Social Movement Studies,* (March, 2021). https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2021.1899910

includes: 1) seeking to re-introduce politeness and respect in the discourse by contrasting with the exuberant style of Salvini, 2) intending to re-mobilize citizens as physical persons by organizing peaceful demonstrations that counterbalance Salvini's visibility and ubiquitous presence on social media, 3) aiming to put back complexity at the center of politics and to break with the simplistic and Manichean populist discourse.[86] They aren't affiliated with a political party and, according to one of their founders, they have no ambition to become one; moreover one study found that 40% of Italians regard the Sardines to be a greater threat to Salvini than his actual political opponents. [87] The Sardine's breakaway from the inherent biases that can exist within the anti-populist umbrella point to two critical realities. On the one hand, their mobilization successes—and lack of concrete ties to traditional political parties—demonstrate the importance of bottoms-up approaches to anti-populism. These are those approaches in which the people recognize the value of democratic channels and choose to stand against their usurpation at the hands of populist leaders. On the other, the Sardines showcase those strands of anti-populism that are not fully in support of the status quo but that understand the importance of democratic institutions, and the threat presented by populist coalitions.

Although conceptualizations and definitions of anti-populism vary, all of the delineated above mention the phenomenon's hostility towards populism, its defense of established norms and institutions, and its ideological diversity. Utilizing the discursive approach—which breeds the least normatively charged definitional standards—anti-populism can be understood as discourse that posits itself in radical opposition to populism, creating an antagonistic frontier between pro-populist

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[86] Soraya Hamdaoui, "A "stylistic anti-populism": an analysis of the Sardine movement's opposition to Matteo Salvini in Italy," *Social Movement Studies,* (March, 2021). https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2021.1899910
[87] Yasmeen Serhan, "Italy's Answer to Populism," *The Atlantic*, (January, 2020). https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/01/italy-sardines-populism-matteo-salvini/605335/

and anti-populist forces.[88] Moreover, anti-populism is not a clear ideological disposition or mode of governance, but rather an odd mix of ideological and strategic bedfellows pulled together in a temporary alliance of opposition to populism.[89] The anti-populists tend to deconstruct the old left-right divide, but in order to constitute a united anti-populist front.[90] The same logic can be applied to populism as both styles pluck from across the ideological spectrum. Because of this, anti-populist coalitions can virtually stem from any side of the political theater. This can lead to the creation of alliances between governments, parties, and movements that would have regularly competed against one another. As mentioned earlier: "a new dimension of political competition based on the contraposition between populism and anti-populism emerged in post-collapse contexts." Post-collapse contexts refer to moments wherein unresponsiveness by the democratic system leads to realities where major parties are not able to attract enough support to maintain an electoral coalition as they turn into empty vessels without a base of support.[91] This dichotomy then becomes the main definer of political clashes. Thus, evaluations in countries where this level of collapse takes place should be based around this spilt as opposed to the left-right divide. Studying anti-populism hand-in-hand with populism is vital as this antagonistic battle—once injected into the mainstream political theater—defines shapes and molds political cultures/realities more so than the left and right divide.

Conclusion

This Chapter sought to present the main problems and debates found within populist-centered literature, and further advocates for the utilization of a discursive frame of analysis in the

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[88] Antonis Galanopoulos and Giorgos Venizelos, "Anti-populism and Populist Hype During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Representation,* (December 2021). DOI:10.1080/00344893.2021.2017334

[89] Benjamin Moffitt, "The Populism/Anti-Populism Divide in Western Europe," *Democratic Theory*, (December 2018), DOI:10.3167/dt.2018.050202

[90] Joan Miro," Beyond populism and institutionalism: Anti-populism and the management of austerity in Spain," *Constellations,* Volume 26, (November 16 2018). https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-8675.12386

[91] Lisa Zanotti, "How's Life After the Collapse? Populism as a Representation Linkage and the Emergence of a Populist/Anti-Populist Political Divide in Italy (1994–2018)," *Frontiers in Political Science*, (July 6 2021). https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.679968

study of both populism and anti-populism. Populist-centered literature faces the risk of conceptually stretching to the point of breaking; were this to happen, populism would become a virtually meaningless word and studying it would be near-impossible. Contemporaneously the label of populist is being used without established definitional criteria or accepted standards of measurement. Additionally, evaluations of populism rarely include evaluations of anti-populism, which can lead to inaccurate conclusions on the subject as anti-populism faces similar definitional challenges. Populism does not exist in its own pocket of time-space, separate from the rest of the political ecosystem. It is imperative that this field recognize the latter and begin adding to the little body of literature that exists on anti-populism.

The populism/anti-populism divide is one of the most important—and perhaps one of the most understudied—cleavages in political studies. In those post-system collapse nations, populism and anti-populism define political cultures, clashes, and alliances. Ideology is background noise, as both frames draw from across the political spectrum. Thus, populism and by extension anti-populism bypass the LR dichotomy in two main ways:

1. Populist and anti-populist rhetoric is not inherently based on ideology as conceptualized by the left-right divide, and

2. Populist and anti-populist coalitions are never just made up of elements from either the left or the right as understood by the LR model. Coalitions on both sides are conglomerations of various, and oftentimes opposing, political elements within political theaters.

This theoretical assessment can be applied to specific nations. The case of Argentina provides a comprehensive evaluation of the LR dichotomy vis-à-vis populism. Analyzing Argentina's Peronist movement, and by including its anti-populist challengers—since their inception in the 1940s to the status quo—can provide examples for how to begin to rebuild academia from within, starting with

the pursuit of definitions that reflect reality, that encompass the diversity found in political

theaters/clashes. Chapters Three and Four focus on these goals.

Chapter Three: A Historiography of Peronism (1940-1976)

Populism has been thoroughly picked apart by academics, poked and prodded to its very core in recent decades. Even more so since the election of former U.S. president Donald J. Trump. Other events, such as the referendum result in favor of Brexit or Marine Le Pen's reaching of the second round of elections for the French Presidency, has contributed to the impression that contemporary politics "has entered an era of global populism."[92] Yet despite these claims, populism is not new. This discursive strategy of politics is not inherently unique or innately specific to a particular moment in time or region. Populist leaders, parties, coalitions, and movements have managed to infiltrate and co-exist alongside mainstream political discourse for centuries. The latter can be seen in Latin America which has experienced what scholars categorize as different waves of populism; these include: classical, neoliberal, and progressive.[93] Appraising the development of populist and anti-populist politics in Latin America is critical, as the latter can aid in the definitional re-framing of political studies brought forward in Chapters One and Two.

Argentina is a near-perfect example of the changes, challenges, and disruptions that a political culture undergoes once populism becomes institutionalized, as it manages to inject itself into the mainstream political theater. A historical evaluation of Argentina's Peronist movement, alongside an interrogation of anti-populist movements which spurred as a result—as a challenge or alternative to Peronism—provide an application of the theoretical assessments constructed in the previous two chapters. Understanding the populist/anti-populist divide is the only way one can properly make sense of Argentinian politics. Both Peronism and its competitors bypass the divide

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[92] Daniel F. Wajner, "Exploring the foreign policies of populist governments: (Latin) America First," Journal of International Relations and Development, (2021). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-020-00206-8
[93] Daniel F. Wajner, "Exploring the foreign policies of populist governments: (Latin) America First," Journal of International Relations and Development, (2021). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-020-00206-8

established by the LR political spectrum. To know Peronism, its history, and its anti-populist challengers, is to truly know the nation.

Pierre Ostiguy: a new method for understanding Argentina

In 2009, scholar and academic, Pierre Ostiguy published a comprehensive research project titled "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies." His work has since then provided the necessary standards and evaluative tools to study Argentinian politics. As explained by Ostiguy, "although left and right *are* highly relevant in Argentine politics and within Argentina's party system or political space, the main political cleavage in Argentina is most definitely not defined in left-right terms."[94] He additionally argues that the main divide in Argentinian politics is that of Peronism and anti-Peronism. Despite this, many still believe the country to exist within a relatively straightforward and Global North-based ideological spectrum of left and right. A detailed exploration of the nation's history challenges the latter assumption and showcases the fluid, heterogeneous and often contradictory nature of politics in Argentina. Ostiguy's study functions as a general framework that this study will expand upon. His impressive and extensive research additionally demonstrates that populism is not ideologically-based. Argentina's own strand of populist politics—Peronism—has undergone a series of radical changes since the movement's inception in the 1940s. These alterations have led to a constant influx and shift in political alliances that are not constricted by leftist or rightist ideological tendencies. In Argentinian politics, ideology (as conceptualized through this traditional/binomial lens of left and right) comes second in the political calculations made by both leaders and voters. This chapter combines the work of Ostiguy with that of the scholars highlighted in Chapter Two and aims to demonstrate how

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[94] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

these ever-changing alliances, made along the lines dictated by populism/anti-populism, support the

theory that populism is not an ideology but rather a discursive frame for understanding politics.

Perón: the birth of Peronism (1943-1955)

Juan Domingo Perón is a figure that has haunted Argentina's history since the 1940s. His

rise to power and continued immortalization—through Peronist coalition-building—can be

understood as the epicenter of the populist/anti-populist rupture. From his ascension into the

presidency, one can analyze the trajectory of populist politics in Argentina. He is the root cause, the

ever-present ghost Peronist politicians rely upon for mass mobilization and the promotion of party

unity. Since the 1940s, the main political cleavage in Argentina has been Peronism versus anti-

Peronism.[95] This division has not been static though, and it is vital to recognize that each Peronist

president, coalition, and movement has brought about changes within the party. There are no

specific ideological tenets Peronists have ever followed, at least not consistently. Peronism is a

matter of performance, it is a frame by which politicians attempt to manage political power and

practice politics. Studying the Peronist nucleus, Juan Perón's presidencies, will provide a clear

picture of the movement's genesis, and its "ideological" diffusion over time.

The Peronist period began in 1943, long before then-General Juan Doming Perón reached

the Argentinian presidency.[96] Perón's involvement in a coup d'état that year propelled him into a

position of substantial power within the Argentinian political apparatus. He became popular for his

work as Secretary of Labor as he passed decrees that substantially expanded labor and social rights.[97]

Through legislation that benefited the previously overlooked working class, Perón gradually created

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[95] Pierre Ostiguy, "Peronism and Anti-Peronism: Class-Cultural Cleavages and Political Identity in Argentina," University of California, Berkeley, (1998). https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/peronism-anti-class-cultural-cleavages-political/docview/304433044/se-2?accountid=8361.

[96] Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Leader and Vanguard in Mass Society: A Study of Peronist Argentina,* Cambridge Massachusetts, The M.I.T Press, (1971). ISBN: 9780262110419

[97] Maria Esperanza Casullo and Flavia Freidenberg, "Populist Parties of Latin America: The Cases of Argentina and Ecuador" in *Political Populism Handbook of Concepts, Questions and Strategies of Research,* ISBN: 978-3-8487-6617-8

links between himself and Argentinian workers. Despite this network of connections, plenty within Argentinian society viewed the regime created in 1943 as a threat. The coup was a catalyst for a perpetual clash between the academic community and the political/military sectors of society. The fracture was inherited and extended through Perón's first administration period (1946-1955).[98] After the usurpation of power took place in '43, intellectuals and university professors signed a manifesto that condemned the actions of the military authorities which had expelled the previous president.[99] This triggered a response by the regime in which the Minister of Justice and Public Instruction, Gustavo Martínez Zuviría, claimed that the Supreme Court of Justice had declared communism illegal and announced that all students and professors who participated in "subversive actions or propaganda" would be expelled from the university.[100] This division of academics/intellectuals and the military continued to evolve during Perón's first presidential term; it ultimately changed the ways in which scientific debates and pursuits were both framed and carried out.

Perón's election to the presidency derives from a range of factors merging at a powerful convergence point. The progressive erosion of the oligarchical system in the 1930s, the massive internal migration of politically inexperienced lower income people into urban centers, the accumulation of communist and socialist union struggles, and the interests of unrepresented elites all play a role in his ascension into power.[101] Perón was a charismatic, nationalistic, military leader who borrowed from fascist leaders in Europe such as Hitler and Mussolini. Peronism proclaimed *Justicialismo* as its core corporatist "ideology," which relied on three basic principles founded on

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[98] Diego Hurtado De Mendoza y Analía Busala, ""De la 'movilización industrial' a la 'Argentina científica': La organización de la ciencia durante el peronismo (1946-1955)," *Revista Da SBHC*, 4 (1), (2006).

[99] Diego Hurtado De Mendoza y Analía Busala, ""De la 'movilización industrial' a la 'Argentina científica': La organización de la ciencia durante el peronismo (1946-1955)," *Revista Da SBHC*, 4 (1), (2006).

[100] Diego Hurtado De Mendoza y Analía Busala, ""De la 'movilización industrial' a la 'Argentina científica': La organización de la ciencia durante el peronismo (1946-1955)," *Revista Da SBHC*, 4 (1), (2006).

[101] Benjamin Moffit, "How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism," *Government and Opposition*, 50 (2) (2015). doi:10.1017/gov.2014.13; Federico M. Rossi, "Peronism," *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements,* (2013). DOI: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbespm366

Social Christian values: social justice, political sovereignty, and economic independence.[102] To adhere

to these values Perón presented Peronism as a third way between capitalism and communism, a

chameleonic method of practicing politics that borrowed from the left and the right. Perón, like all

corporatist theorists, was nearer to liberalism than to Marxism.[103] Corporatism relates to the theory

and practice of organizing society into "corporations" subordinate to the state; according to

corporatist theory, workers and employers would be organized into industrial and professional

corporations serving as organs of political representation and controlling to a large extent the

persons and activities within their jurisdiction.[104] Perón considered socialism and communism to

herald from the same deficient Marxist branch and critiqued capitalism for being a cold, inhuman

force of accumulation.[105] Thus, mobilization operated through a bypassing of ties to either capitalism

or communism. His objective was forging an alliance between labor and capital with the

encouragement of the Army and the Church yet he relied on labor unions for the majority of

support.[106] In doing so, he dictated political clashes through a utilization of the "us vs. them"

narrative framework traditionally employed by populist leaders. He used the empty signifier

(established by Laclau and presented in Chapter Two) of "the people" to garner support. He posited

himself as the people's direct link to democracy and subsequently usurped channels of democracy

and potential avenues for those wishing to oppose his administration (such as the press or

universities).

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[102] Federico M. Rossi, "Peronism," *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements,* (2013). DOI: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbespm366

[103] F. J. McLynn, "The Ideology of Peronism: The Third Way and the Law of the Excluded Middle," *Government and Opposition* 19, no. 2 (1984): 193–206. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44484659.

[104] Britannica, "Corporatism," *Politics and Political Systems*, Accessed 2022. https://www.britannica.com/topic/corporatism

[105] F. J. McLynn, "The Ideology of Peronism: The Third Way and the Law of the Excluded Middle," *Government and Opposition* 19, no. 2 (1984): 193–206. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44484659.

[106] Emilio Campo, "What Kind of Populism is Peronism?" *Serie Documentos de Trabajo, No. 732*, Universidad del Centro de Estudios Macroeconómicos de Argentina (UCEMA), Buenos Aires, (2020). https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/238357/1/732.pdf

Peronism was, and continues to be, a populist movement. Mobilization efforts entailed the inclusion of previously neglected elements of society such as the working class or new industrialists through the exclusion of other socio-cultural and class groups. Before being elected as president "the enemy" were those in the upper echelons of society. This included the landed oligarchy, the business establishment, and anything related to "Yankee imperialism."[107] He incited stark division between the national body along this binary of "us and them," and found a way to navigate those divisions as he pleased. Peronism has never been ideologically bound by anything other than power. Because of this, it fits under the discursive frame definition delineated in Chapter Two. Through this lens, populist movements like Peronism can be defined as the systematic dissemination of a frame that diagnoses reality as problematic because "corrupt elites" have unjustly usurped the sovereign authority of the "noble people" and maintains that the solution to the problem resides in the righteous political mobilization of the latter in order to regain power.[108]

On February 24, 1946, Juan Perón became president of Argentina with a sweeping majority vote. He heralded what some scholars label as the "Peronist revolution" and brought forward a set of unconventional political alliances that cut across class and social sectors. Peronism included the emergent national industrialists as well as politically marginal civil and military right-wing and Social Christian intellectuals, the urban and rural proletariat (which had been neglected by politics in the past), small and medium industrial and commercial entrepreneurs, and the rural middle bourgeoisie.[109] Studies indicate that Peronist support in 1946 was generally widespread and not

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[107] Emilio Campo, "What Kind of Populism is Peronism?" *Serie Documentos de Trabajo, No. 732*, Universidad del Centro de Estudios Macroeconómicos de Argentina (UCEMA), Buenos Aires, (2020). https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/238357/1/732.pdf

[108] Paris Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies*, 64 (15), (2016). DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12224

[109] Federico M. Rossi, "Peronism," *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements*, (2013). DOI: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbespm366; Juan Eugenio Corradi, "Argentina and Peronism: Fragments of the Puzzle," *Latin American Perspectives*, (1974). https://www.jstor.org/stable/2633117

strongly associated with any particular group.[110] These figures and assessments showcase the diverse background of Perón's movement. In the Peronist coalition there were no adherences to political loyalties traditionally associated with each of these groups (as understood through a binomial lens of left and right). The mixing and melding of loyalties, goals, and pseudo-plans presented by *Justicialismo* allowed Peronism to bypass the constrictions of either the left or the right. Having relied upon right-wing, military support to garner initial control of Argentinian political apparatus, Perón later realized the untapped potential of the working class. Between 1946 and 1955 he incorporated urban industrial workers into his power base but did so at the cost of alienating the business establishment.[111] This shift from right to center, and eventually left, represented a break-away from the expected trajectory of political movements. The contradictory and shifting alliances additionally point to another defining characteristic of Peronism: personalism. "The people" of Peronism was created as a necessarily ambiguous label and applied to heterogenous social sectors. Perón's success was largely based on his ability to serve as an "articulator of heterogeneous forces over which he established his personal control through a complicated system of alliances."[112] At the center of political alliances and clashes stood Perón. His will was that of the people.

Much of Perón's focus was on the working class. The Peronist' economic model could be considered as an emulation of the Scandinavian welfare states in a mixed economy with a central role for unions in corporatist arrangements.[113] He promoted the integration of workers into unions (henceforth controlled by the Peronist state), increased the number of recipients of public social

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[110] E. Spencer Wellhofer, "Peronism in Argentina: The Social Base of the First Regime, 1946-1955," *The Journal of Developing Areas*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Apr., 1977), pp. 335-356. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4190484

[111] Emilio Campo, "What Kind of Populism is Peronism?" *Serie Documentos de Trabajo, No. 732*, Universidad del Centro de Estudios Macroeconómicos de Argentina (UCEMA), Buenos Aires, (2020). https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/238357/1/732.pdf

[112] Julia Beth Fierman, "'We Are Peronists, We Are Organic': Discipline, Authority, and Loyalty in Argentine Populism," *Social Sciences* (August, 2021). https://doi.org/10.3390/ socsci10090326

[113] Federico M. Rossi, "Peronism," *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements,* (2013). DOI: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbespm366; Juan Eugenio Corradi, "Argentina and Peronism: Fragments of the Puzzle," *Latin American Perspectives*, (1974). https://www.jstor.org/stable/2633117

securities, and redistributed national income that benefitted the working class.[114] Through Eva

Perón, his second wife, he rallied the support of women and in 1947, they were given the right to

vote. There is no denying that his policies originally led to the inclusion of previously neglected

sectors of society. However, it is critical to note that the methods operationalized for the sake of this

inclusion came with a hefty cost, and led to the erosion of democratic safeguards in Argentina—

which these groups later had to pay for in the 1980s. The authoritarian, and near-fascist, undertones

of Perón's first two presidencies are undeniable, and are not bound by ideology. As a matter of fact,

the waning and shifting of Perón's alliances showcase the movement's refusal to remain static on

either side of the political spectrum as reforms were not ideologically-based but rather power-based,

and made on the whims of Perón.

In 1947, the Perón government began to move against free press channels. *La Prensa* and *La*

Nación (the two greatest papers in Argentina at the time) were sued for libel by the President for

carrying in their columns reports that critiqued him, and were under constant pressure from the

government (which controlled all supplies of newsprint and used its power to compel

subservience).[115] *La Prensa* was shut down for its desire to remain independent from the state-

controlled propaganda machine while other news outlets came under seizure by the government. In

September of 1949, Peronist controlled Congress passed the law of disrespect which severely

penalized criticism of government officials by the press or by individuals.[116] This gravely limited

channels of opposition and left little to no room for critique without severe consequence. During his

first and into his second presidency, Perón additionally attached Peronist ideology to constitutional

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[114] Katharina Schembs, "Staging Work in the Corporatist State Visual Propaganda in Fascist Italy and Peronist Argentina (1922-1955)," *Anuario de Historia de América Latina*, (2020). https://doi.org/10.15460/jbla.58.162
[115] The Guardian, "Perón and the press – archive, 1950," *The Guardian Archive: Argentina,* (January, 2019). https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/09/peron-and-the-press-archive-1950
[116] Lucretia L. Ilsley, "The Argentine Constitutional Revision of 1949," *The Journal of Politics* 14, no. 2 (1952): 224–40. https://doi.org/10.2307/2126520.

reforms (1949) and injected Peronist teachings into school curriculums.[117] Massive propaganda

campaigns in favor of his government were born during this time. The Peronist administration used

magazines, pamphlets, and posters which it displayed on the streets, in government buildings and

even in private homes, to create an entire universe of symbols surrounding the greatness of Perón

and Eva.[118] In relation to constitutional arrangements, the changes accentuated the presidential

nature of the political system as the faculties of the Executive branch were increased and presidential

re-elections became possible.[119] Moreover, the electoral college was abolished, inferior judges to the

Supreme Court removed, and education rights left up to the state as opposed to the provinces

(virtually limiting and reducing provincial power).[120] All in all, democratic safeguards shrunk during

the first two Peronist periods. This had an array of consequences for those wishing to oppose his

rule as coalition building became more difficult.

Anti-Peronism: the first wave (1946-1955)

Peronism has never existed in a vacuum or its own separate pocket of time-space. Even

though Perón shared a wide range of support from across an array of socio-cultural and class

sectors, opposition to Peronism has materialized in the Argentinian political theater since the

movement's inception. Anti-Peronism has changed, grown, and molded alongside Peronism.

Interrogating its history can showcase the Argentinian anti-populist movement's chameleonic

nature, and the ways in which it bypasses the left right political spectrum. The challenger to Perón's

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[117] F. J. McLynn, "The Ideology of Peronism: The Third Way and the Law of the Excluded Middle," *Government and Opposition* 19, no. 2 (1984): 193–206. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44484659.
[118] Juan Pablo Artinian, "Representations of Peronism as totalitarianism in the view of the Socialist Party during a Cold War period in Argentina (1950-1955)," *Culture and History Digital Journal,* 4(1), (June 2015). doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2015.005
[119] Marcela García Sebastiani, "The Other Side of Peronist Argentina: Radicals and Socialists in the Political Opposition to Perón (1946-1955)," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (May, 2003), pp. 311-339. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3875952
[120] Lucretia L. Ilsley, "The Argentine Constitutional Revision of 1949," *The Journal of Politics* 14, no. 2 (1952): 224–40. https://doi.org/10.2307/2126520.

movement can be defined as "the political forces opposing Peronism-in-power."[121] This minimal definition fits under the anti-populist label presented in Chapter Two in which anti-populism can be understood as a discourse that posits itself in radical opposition to populism, creating an antagonistic frontier between pro-populist and anti-populist forces.[122]

Just as the Peronist alliances included elements that cut across the ideological spectrum and socio-cultural groups, anti-Peronism has been (and continues to be) a melting pot of ideologies and groups. Despite the inclusive nature of the Peronist movement, many anti-fascist and pro-Allied (as it relates to World War Two) coalitions—which had consolidated during the war period—considered Perón to be the natural offspring of the anti-liberal military regime that had initially brought him to power in 1943.[123] As such, they believed his rise and policies to signal his demagoguery and his desire to build an anti-democratic regime similar to those in Europe.[124] In response to Perón's power consolidation, ideologically different groups came together. Due to this, anti-Peronism was not bound by traditional party loyalties or alliances. The forces opposing Perón in 1946, calling themselves the Democratic Union, ranged from Communists and Socialists, to *Radicales* (Radicals), to conservative business sectors.[125] It additionally included the bulk of *Unión Cívica Radical* (Radical Civic Union, UCR) and the conservative Argentine Industrial Union (*Unión Industrial Argentina*, or UIA).[126]

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[121] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[122] Antonis Galanopoulos and Giorgos Venizelos, "Anti-populism and Populist Hype During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Representation,* (December 2021). DOI:10.1080/00344893.2021.2017334

[123] Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9

[124] Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9

[125] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[126] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

They all viewed Perón as a threat for their own set of reasons. Conservatives did not like Perón's corporatist economic policies or his encroaching on individual freedoms, while Communists and Socialists considered him to be a fascist and associated him with Hitler and Mussolini. One of the unifying factors or myths of the anti-Peronist coalition came to be liberalism as the group believed Perón threatened the liberal order.[127] Political conflict was thus framed as a clash between an authoritarian type of government appealing to a culturally-localist form of nationalism, on the one hand, and left-of-center political parties, students, and intellectuals asking for a liberal-democratic form of non-authoritarian democratic rule on the other.[128] In terms of left or right, the overall anti-Peronist coalition, which attempted to defeat him in 1946 and continued to object his government since, did not exclusively adhere to either side of the political spectrum.

Even though they sought to present a unified front before and after the presidential elections, this conglomeration of parties ultimately failed to garner enough support to win. Perón was elected as president twice (1946, 1952). There are a number of reasons for this reality. Regardless of the fact that the ideologically diverse units of anti-Peronism considered themselves to be defenders of democracy, they were ultimately plagued by a range of inconsistencies (in relation to mass mobilization strategies) and internal divisions. Anti-Peronism during this time can and should be labeled as elitist, as the Democratic Union rejected the working and lower classes and considered them to be "ignorant masses deceived by a totalitarian leader or simple residues of barbarism."[129] In terms of divisions, many within the anti-Peronist movement could not agree on the levels of acceptance of the liberal order as dictated by political debates in the aftermath of World War Two.

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[127] Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9

[128] Pierre Ostiguy, "Peronism and Anti-Peronism: Class-Cultural Cleavages and Political Identity in Argentina," University of California, Berkeley, (1998). https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/peronism-anti-class-cultural-cleavages-political/docview/304433044/se-2?accountid=8361.

[129] Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9

Various pro-Allied sectors supported different elements of liberalism; for example, *La Prensa* (conservative) argued for "individual freedom" and an "opposition to doctrines of individual submission to the state" while *Argentina Libre* (radical, socialist, and progressive democrat) stated that "saving fundamental individual freedoms, reconcile fertile liberalism with Socialist principles of organization."[130] Tensions could also be found between Communists and Socialists, and among the Catholic members of anti-Peronist groups. *Orden Cristiano* (liberal Catholic magazine), for instance, sought to reconcile liberalism with Catholicism, a difficult project that led to constant tensions and confrontations with the Catholic hierarchy.[131] Ultimately, these clashes and contradictions (among others), culminated into the coalition's failure to win the national elections. Alliances were fraught and fragile, and could not rely on the charismatic personalism of Peronism or the simplified model of politics presented by populism.

Mobilization and coalition-building efforts were further complicated by the curtailing of civil society by the Perón administration. Limitations were placed on dissident opinion during both of Perón's presidencies and the powers of the Executive extended to shrink the rights of other branches within the Argentinian government. Schools and many newspapers were subjected to state-mandated curriculums. Extreme political violence became normalized during this time period and was encouraged by Perón himself. In 1953, the Socialist *Casa del Pueblo* was set on fire by followers of Perón; this further fueled de-humanization campaigns employed by both Peronists and anti-Peronists alike.[132] Thus, the democratic spaces that had once been available for dissent and critique grew smaller and smaller with each year of Peronist rule.

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[130] Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9

[131] Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9

[132] Juan Pablo Artinian, "Representations of Peronism as totalitarianism in the view of the Socialist Party during a Cold War period in Argentina (1950-1955)," *Culture and History Digital Journal*, 4(1), (June 2015). doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2015.005

As a result of this clear overstretching of power, former Peronist blocs turned against him. By 1952, Perón started to make courses in *Justicialismo* compulsory in schools which triggered backlash from the Catholic Church, an incredibly powerful force in Argentina.[133] Over time Perón gradually alienated businessmen, industrialists, and the Church—groups that had once been instrumental in his gaining of power—which resulted in his ousting, and on the ultimate failure to create a fully corporate state in Argentina. By mid-1955 the enlarged opposition was able to gather force: a failed coup in June was followed in September by a limited insurrection that won the day thanks to the passivity of the bulk of the army and the decisive support of the navy.[134] Anti-Peronist groups relied on sectors that had previously supported Perón to oust him. Both Church and Army had once aided the Perón administration, yet ultimately decided to turn against him. These alliances with the anti-populist flank did not last long though and Perón's exile did not dissipate his supporters or popularity. Soon enough, Argentinian politics were once more overtaken by the now-established dichotomy of Peronism vs anti-Peronism.

Peronism without Perón: 1955-1974

Perón's ousting did nothing to undo the shocks the Argentinian political system had already undergone. Even while in exile, Perón and his legacy continued to affect trajectory of Argentinian politics. During this time, the Peronist coalition developed within its ranks a "leftist" consciousness and awareness. Many scholars have categorized this shift in rhetoric and practice as a response to the exclusion of Peronism from political power and the continued attacks on the working class.[135] Peronism not only became fragmented and polarized as a result of Perón's machinations, the

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[133] F. J. McLynn, "The Ideology of Peronism: The Third Way and the Law of the Excluded Middle," *Government and Opposition* 19, no. 2 (1984): 193–206. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44484659.

[134] Tulio Halperin-Donghi, "The Peronist Revolution and its Ambiguous Legacy," *Institute of Latin American Studies,* (1998). https://sas-space.sas.ac.uk/4564/1/B73_-_The_Peronist_Revolutionand_Its_Ambiguous_Legacy.pdf

[135] Daniel James, "The Peronist Left, 1955-1975," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 8(2), (November, 1976). https://www.jstor.org/stable/156528

Argentinian left gradually joined the Peronist front. Over time this division between more right-wing elements of the movement and its newly acquired/developed leftist facets would spill over into massive events of political violence.

In the aftermath of Peronist rule, those in power sought to create a stable political system without Peronism. Their goal was to restore the hegemony of the "democratic" political parties through the forced exclusion of Peronism.[136] Despite these attempts to be a channel for democracy, the immediate result of the 1955 coup was the creation of a provisional government dominated by the armed forces; even though anti-Peronist parties could somewhat collaborate with the new leaders, responsibility for policy rested with a military *junta*.[137] The price for political stability came with a somewhat temporary takeover by the armed forces and with the continual, and at times, forceful removal of Peronism from the political sphere. The Peronist Party was dissolved while the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and the unions interdicted placed under the control of officers of the armed forces.[138] To guarantee a safe and relatively peaceful return to democracy though, the head of the provisional military government, General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu, eventually ceded power to a semi-democratic system. Even though Peronism was not allowed to participate in the national elections as an official party, some anti-Peronist parties sought to secure the Peronist vote. Peronism during this time essentially moved underground, surviving within trade unions, clandestine cadre organizations, and thousands of neighborhood activist networks as the party was banned and intermittently repressed throughout most of the 1955-1983 period.[139] As a

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[136] Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Peronism and Radicalism: Argentina's Transition in Perspective," *Paper prepared for the conference "Political Parties and the Return to Democracy in the Southern Cone,"* (September, 1985). https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/wp170_peronism_and_radicalism._argentinas_transition_in_perspective.pdf

[137] Robert A. Potash, "The Changing Role of the Military in Argentina," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 3, no. 4 (1961): 571–78. https://doi.org/10.2307/165084.

[138] Luis Alberto Romero, "The Stalemate, 1955-1966," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

[139] Steven Levitsky, "An 'Organised Disorganisation': Informal Organisation and the Persistence of Local Party Structures in Argentine Peronism," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Argentine (Feb., 2001), pp. 29-66.

result of this change in power dynamics, Peronism itself experienced a range of ideological shifts within its internal structure.

Arturo Frondizi emerged as President of the Unión Cívica Radical, in the aftermath of the 1958 elections; his party was a major opposer to Perón yet managed to secure a large following from previous Peronist sectors such as unions.[140] This altering in alliances was seen by many Peronists as a betrayal to the movement and to their leader. As the dominant forces within the Peronist leadership—specifically the trade union bureaucracy—moved towards agreement with the Frondizi government and status quo conditions, the left labeled them as traitors and a strongly, definable 'left' current emerged.[141] This added to growing tensions and further destabilized the political apparatus.

Besides this apparent cleavage in the movement's ideological trajectory, divisions grew between those Peronists who believed in "Peronism without Perón" and followers who sought to take orders from the exiled president. Perón used his tactical skills to defend his leadership against the Vandorist union leaders (who supported Metalworks Union figure, Augusto Vandor) and neo-Peronist politicians who sought to move Peronism's main locus of authority away from him and toward a political party under their own hegemony.[142] This proved to be a challenging endeavor as Perón's influence had poisoned the system and his own movement; the latter complicated attempts by neo-Peronist's to secure consistent support. In 1965-6, with the consolidation of the growing Vandorist domination of Peronism—which was seen as conservative and rightist—the left emerged from relative obscurity to join in a rival Peronist union organization (*Organizaciones de Pie junto a*

: https://www.jstor.org/stable/3653646

[140] Robert J. Alexander, "Argentina After Perón," *Current History (Pre-1986)* 38, no. 000223 (03, 1960): 165. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/argentina-after-peron/docview/202914718/se-2?accountid=8361.

[141] Daniel James, "The Peronist Left, 1955-1975," *Journal of Latin American Studies,* 8(2), (November, 1976). https://www.jstor.org/stable/156528

[142] James W. McGuire, "Argentine Unions Since 1955: Power and Politicization in a Weak Party System," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Students*, (August 1989). http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.366.4809&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Perón) to oppose the takeover by Vandor.[143] This opposition was fueled by Perón's refusal to surrender power to neo-Peronist factions or leaders within the movement. He utilized the newly obtained leftist support to prevent other leaders under the Peronist banner from gaining enough votes to form a party or cohesive political movement. Whereas he had one relied on right-wing, fascist rhetoric to mobilize his supporters, Perón learned to weaponize demands from the left and promoted the backing of puppet leaders whose strings he ultimately managed. Peronism, within the Perón/anti-Perón dichotomy that dominated the political and social context, was per se leftist, anti-establishment, and revolutionary, and loyalty to the exiled and vilified leader was enough of a definition of a political strategy.[144] Perón's movement, the once-hailed inclusionary form of populist politics—which I argue is a false cognate as populism is heavily contingent upon exclusion and division—had turned on itself, becoming like the Ouroboros snake, forever bound by a cycle of endless destruction and subsequent rebirth.

In the 1970s, against the backdrop of military regimes (1966-73), the Peronist front continued to tear from within. Tensions were two-fold: existing on each side of the ideological spectrum and inside Peronism itself. Augusto Vandor (often considered a center-right individual) had been assassinated in 1969 by Peronist guerillas; his successor, Lorenzo Miguel was jailed by the military during the 1970s.[145] These events were accompanied by the official coming together of left-wing guerilla groups. The most important of these groups in terms of size and influence was *Montoneros*—a strange fusion of far-right catholic nationalism and independent Marxism—which utilized radical revolutionary language to mobilize working class sectors under the absolute

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[143] Daniel James, "The Peronist Left, 1955-1975," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 8(2), (November, 1976). https://www.jstor.org/stable/156528

[144] Daniel James, "The Peronist Left, 1955-1975," *Journal of Latin American Studies,* 8(2), (November, 1976). https://www.jstor.org/stable/156528

[145] Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Peronism and Radicalism: Argentina's Transition in Perspective," *Paper prepared for the conference "Political Parties and the Return to Democracy in the Southern Cone,"* (September, 1985). https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/wp170_peronism_and_radicalism._argentinas_transition_in_perspective.pdf

leadership of Perón, and sought to reinstate him into power.[146] This violent movement took direct orders from Perón while in exile and ultimately secured his return. They engaged on a myriad of politically violent endeavors including kidnappings and assassinations. The *Montonero* strategy was defined as one of "popular war (leading to) the seizure of power and the construction of 'national' socialism in which the three banners of Economic Independence, Social Justice and Political Sovereignty would be made a reality.[147] Thus, yet another seismic change within Peronism can be observed: leftist consciousness eventually materializing into a disjointed quasi-leftist effort which evolved into radical revolution backed by Marxist, Cuban revolution inspired, and most importantly Peronist teachings. At the center of the change is Peronism's ever-present North star: Perón himself. Yet, even within the left-leaning wings of the Peronist movement, betrayal ran deep and true.

In 1973, Perón returned after 18 years of exile as a result of the *Montoneros* and *Juventud Peronista* movements' efforts to challenge the military regime in power. On September 23th 1973, Perón was elected president for a third time with 62% of the vote.[148] Despite these contributions Perón condemned *Montonero's* violent actions and broke any associations he had had with the guerilla group in 1974. He directly denounced *Montoneros* and *Juventud Peronista* as "callow and stupid;" even then, *Montoneros* refused to abandon their leader, believing Perón to be surrounded by right-wingers alienating him from the people and the movement.[149] Loyalty to their leader had defined the leftist flanks of Peronism and these bonds were near-unbreakable. Even so, a gradual return to the less radicalized, more center-right politics seemed imminent for Peronism with Perón back in power.

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[146] Daniel James, "The Peronist Left, 1955-1975," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 8(2), (November, 1976). https://www.jstor.org/stable/156528

[147] Richard Gillespie, "Peronism and Left Militarism," *Bulletin of the Society for Latin American Studies*, No. 30 (April 1979), pp. 36-79. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44746413

[148] Martina Garategaray, "'Montoneros Leales a Perón:' Notas Sobre la Juventud Peronista Lealtad," *Revista electrónica de la Asociación Española de Americanistas*, n. 9, (2012). ISSN 1989-211X.

[149] Santiago Colás, *Postmodernity in Latin America: The Argentine Paradigm***,** Durham: Duke UP, (1994).

On the other side of the Peronist ideological aisle grew right-wing paramilitary Peronist groups such as *La Guardia de Hierro* (Iron Guard) and *La Alianza Anticomunista* Argentina (Triple A). *La Guardia de Hierro*—born in the 1960s—were self-proclaimed enemies of *Montoneros* whom they denounced as "Marxist infiltration," and believed themselves to be orthodox Peronists.[150] Their proposal was a total and prolonged war that implied defeating the historical enemies of Peronism: the liberal bourgeoisie, imperialists, and those who embodied the historical personification of anti-Peronism; they were not as concerned with the question of worker's rights as other elements of Peronism.[151] This group combined the ultra-nationalist aspects of Peronism with fears of Marxist infiltration of the political sphere. Triple A, on the other hand, was a parastatal death squad responsible for the killing of many leftists in the 1970s.[152] The anti-communist alliance sought to eradicate the leftist sectors within and outside Peronism, and utilized political violence as its ultimate weapon to fulfill that goal from 1973-1976.

The existence of the Triple A can be understood as an illegal and inhuman deal struck between the federal government and Peronist fundamentalists who wished to see Perón regain and maintain power. Triple A illegally used members of the Federal Police, members of the Presidential guard and the Ministry of Welfare, as well as personnel from the State Intelligence Secretariat; the group was responsible for hundreds of threat, attacks, and murders first against militants of the Peronist left and later against all those who disturbed the established order. [153] This violent and more

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[150] Humberto Cucchetti, "¿Derechas peronistas? Organizaciones militantes entre nacionalismo, cruzada anti-montoneros y profesionalización política," *Nuevo Mundo,* (2013). https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.65363

[151] Humberto Cucchetti, "Socialización intensiva y violencia en el peronismo: el problema de la lucha armada en Guardia de Hierro," *Anuario de Lucha Armada en Argentina*, (2010).

[152] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[153] Juan Luis Besoky, "Violencia paraestatal y organizaciones de derecha. Aportes para repensar el entramado represivo en la Argentina, 1970-1976," *Nuevo Mundo*, (2016). https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.68974

right-wing turn in Peronist politics showcases yet another change within the internal structure of the Peronist movement.

These internal tensions eventually culminated in the continued normalization of violence as a means of practicing politics. Some scholars on the subject have come to label the years of 1973-1976 as a period of Peronist civil war as members from paramilitary groups on both sides of the ideological spectrum sought to exert their will over the Peronist movement.[154] The desire for domination over Peronism stemmed from different interpretations of what it meant to be a "true" Peronist. After his death in 1974, Perón's movement continued to engage in this definition-based war across all fronts. Issues arose from the movement's ever-changing definitional standards which were dynamic and had morphed due to the internal and external conflicts delineated above. Since the 1940s, the definition of Peronism has existed outside the boundaries of traditional movements or parties. As a result, Peronist ranks suffered from constant and violent metamorphoses all across the ideological spectrum. Even after his passing, Perón continued to haunt Argentina as the last military *junta* sought to eradicate his legacy and wholly alter Argentinian society through despicable means.

Anti-Peronism without Perón: 1955-1974

After his ousting in 1955, leaders and activists of the anti-Peronist movement recognized the power that Peronism still exerted over Argentinian politics, and employed an array of different tactics to ensure a return to Peronist politics was near-impossible, ranging from political violence and the banning of Peronism from elections, to Peronist recruitment within their ranks. These conflicts, debates and strategies existed within the confines of Argentina's deteriorating political infrastructure. The nation underwent military rule (1955- 8) indirect military rule, (1962-3), and

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[154] Humberto Cucchetti, "¿Derechas peronistas? Organizaciones militantes entre nacionalismo, cruzada anti-montoneros y profesionalización política," *Nuevo Mundo,* (2013). https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.65363

direct intervention again (1966-73); military interventions were experienced in the first period to overthrow Perón and to prepare the way for an acceptable non-Peronist government, and in the second two cases interventions were made precisely to prevent the possibility of a return of Peronism to power.[155] Regardless of candidate, policy position, or proposed plans for society, debates and political alliances were framed through this binary of Peronism and anti-Peronism as opposed to traditional divides of left and right. Consequently, the overall anti-Peronist coalition experienced a myriad of internal changes that constantly bypassed the ideological LR dichotomy. Challenges in terms of coalition maintenance stemmed from the ultimate question presented by the fall of Perón: what now for the Argentinian political system?

General Aramburu, who headed the provisional government from 1955 until 1958, fully assumed responsibility to dismantle Peronism; some steps to undergo this endeavor non-exhaustively included the dissolving of the Peronist party, the abolishment of the 1949 Constitution, and the forbidding of any kind of pro-Perón propaganda.[156] Thus, the armed forces comprehensively became an anti-Peronist body which sought to erase the former's grip on the country and her national consciousness. However, this hard-liner approach and the Army's enforcement methods created rifts within the anti-Peronist bloc. On the right, some old nationalists and "popular conservatives" chose to align with Peronism while on the left, the government's repressive policies forced people to abandon the anti-Peronist bloc in which they had until then coexisted alongside their natural enemies.[157] The force with which the provisional government chose to utilize in

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[155] Daniel James, "The Peronist Left, 1955-1975," *Journal of Latin American Studies,* 8(2), (November, 1976). https://www.jstor.org/stable/156528
[156] Luis Alberto Romero, "The Stalemate, 1955-1966," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).
[157] Luis Alberto Romero, "The Stalemate, 1955-1966," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

approaching the Peronist question became counterproductive. It incited further fragmentation within the anti-Peronist movement and pushed many non-Peronist actors into Perón's waiting arms.

With the Peronist dictatorship gone, the UCR (*Unión Cívica Radical* or Radical Civic Union) once again became the nation's strongest political force.[158] Moreover, the military government's banning of Peronism as a party meant that the Radicals faced little to no opposition within the political theater. Even so, the UCR continued to be incredibly divided which complicated consolidation efforts. In 1957, Alberto Frondizi's nomination for presidency (1956) led to a major spilt within the party; this division between newly formed *Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente* (pro-Frondizi, UCRI) and *Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo* (conservative wing, anti-Frondizi, pro Ricardo Balbín, UCRP) represented the diverging views regarding the Peronist issue as well as differences in terms of group alliances and their base of representation.[159] Frondizi, an avid critic of the provisional military regime, a left-leaning progressive capitalist, and someone who sought to secure Peronist support, campaigned throughout 1957 and 1958. He appealed to the working class and aimed to include former Peronist supporters into his movement. However, his refusal to completely ostracize Peronist voters led to discontent within the anti-Peronist bloc. Yet despite these growing tensions, UCRI obtained around 70 percent of the electoral votes.[160] UCRI's reliance on the Peronist vote would lead to further polarization within its ranks.

Fragmentation continued to plague the anti-Peronist movement throughout the 1960s. Late in 1960, each of the existing Radical Parties split again as the UCRI moved to the right in the ideological spectrum; this led to the creation of *Movemiento Nacional y Popular* (leftist, MNP) and *Unión*

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[158] Peter G. Snow, "Argentine Radicalism: 1957-1963," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 5, no. 4 (1963): 507–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/165174.

[159] Miko Mandilovitch, "Group Conflict and Political Change in Argentina (1955-1966)," University of Michigan, (1976). https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/group-conflict-political-change-argentina-1955/docview/302767893/se-2?accountid=8361

[160] Miko Mandilovitch, "Group Conflict and Political Change in Argentina (1955-1966)," University of Michigan, (1976). https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/group-conflict-political-change-argentina-1955/docview/302767893/se-2?accountid=8361

Cívica (leftist splinter within UCRI).[161] Frondizi became an even more controversial figure inside the anti-Peronist bloc throughout his presidency as he allowed for further Peronist access into the political theater. On March 1962, shortly before the congressional elections, the President announced that Peronists would be allowed to run for all public offices under the label of some of the neo-Peronists parties; Frondizi's actions angered the armed forces, led to his deposing, and the return to indirect military rule in the country. [162] The fracturing and displacement inside the Radical's ranks was accompanied by more cracks spreading in the anti-Peronist foundation. In 1963, the UCRI itself divided as the bulk of the party backed progressive Buenos Aires governor Oscar Alende, transforming the UCRI into a left of center party; the rest of the party, led by Frondizi, formed the *Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo* (Movement of Integration and Development or MID), which shifted to the right, appealed to nationalist industrialists, and eventually became an ally of the Peronists.[163] Despite the viable—albeit, at times, undemocratic—channels available for Radicalism to gain and maintain power, anti-Peronist movements failed to quell their own internal tensions, which left the bloc vulnerable to external pressures. Even so, 1963 saw the return of post-Peronism and post-military rule until 1966. Arturo Illía, a centrist UCR candidate, governed from 1963-66. His presidency was punctuated by economic crises, a respect for democratic procedures, a resolve to not abuse presidential powers, and a desire not to exacerbate conflicts, in the hope that these would be resolved in time.[164] Despite these attempts at quelling conflicts, more in Argentina

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[161] Peter G. Snow, "Argentine Radicalism: 1957-1963," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 5, no. 4 (1963): 507–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/165174.

[162] Miko Mandilovitch, "Group Conflict and Political Change in Argentina (1955-1966)," University of Michigan, (1976). https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/group-conflict-political-change-argentina-1955/docview/302767893/se-2?accountid=8361

[163] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[164] Luis Alberto Romero, "The Stalemate, 1955-1966," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

became disillusioned with democracy's inefficiencies, and agreed with the military's attempt to establish order.

As a result, the armed forces took over the Argentinian political apparatus once more in 1966. General Juan Carlos Onganía led a military coup that toppled the civilian government of President Arturo Illía; the military attempted to maintain power indefinitely and led a restoration of a "Christian sense of family."[165] Anti-communist rhetoric plagued the regime and eventually led to the targeted repression of academic centers.[166] Universities were seen as points of genesis for communist rhetoric and as such were subjected to bans and censorship campaigns. Even though support for this military takeover came from a diverse range of channels—including Perón himself—Radicals, Socialists and Communists stood in staunch opposition to the usurpation.[167] Yet it was not their forces that ultimately overthrew the military regime but rather Peronist and left-wing guerilla groups like *Montoneros.*

Popular mobilization was increasingly being identified with Peronism and with Perón; the Radicals and other anti-Peronist elements remained in the sidelines for much of this time as former anti-Peronist sectors (such as the upper middle class) began to see his return as a promise for peace.[168] Perón's influence continued to grow during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and the ongoing violence incited by the military created an environment where the Argentinian people reverently wished for a return to normalcy and balance. As a result of the armed forces' approach to political repression and violence, unprecedent cooperation between the Peronist and anti-Peronist took place. In 1970, the Peronists and Radicals signed a pact, *La Hora del Pueblo*, whereby they reversed

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[165] Marco A. Ramos, "Psychiatry, Authoritarianism, and Revolution," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine,* (Summer 2013). https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26305918
[166] Marco A. Ramos, "Psychiatry, Authoritarianism, and Revolution," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, (Summer 2013). https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26305918
[167] Luis Alberto Romero, "Dependency or Liberation, 1966-1976," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).
[168] Luis Alberto Romero, "Dependency or Liberation, 1966-1976," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

the antagonism that had made them irreconcilable opponents since the mid-1940s.[169] The agreement

meant that neither party would participate in a coming election if any of them was proscribed, and

both would support the resulting constitutional regime, irrespective of the winner.[170] This level of

agreement between the two sides of the dichotomy represented a temporary change in Argentinian

party politics wherein co-existence appeared to be a possibility, one that never fully materialized.

Most of the internal factions of Peronism gave only lip service to support Perón's initiative;

ultimately, despite their ideological differences, the *Montonero* guerillas, the union leadership, and the

fascistic palace clique which surrounded Perón and his wife upon his return, all coincided in their

hostility toward the establishment of a party-dominated political system.[171] As a result of his refusal

to relinquish power and control, Perón managed to secure a large portion of the votes in 1973. *La*

Hora del Pueblo represented a fleeting moment of collaboration and partnership between anti-

Peronists and Peronists which did not hold for long. In the face of a larger threat to the survival of

Argentina's political apparatus—the armed forces—factions from across the Peronist-centered

divide managed to come together. Although these moments are rare and few in between, their

existence points to the complexity of alliances within and outside both Peronism and anti-Peronism.

Conclusion

Argentina's political reality does not fit the traditional frameworks utilized to understand

politics in a comparative or global sense. The historiography of both Peronism and anti-Peronism

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[169] Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Peronism and Radicalism: Argentina's Transition in Perspective," *Paper prepared for the conference "Political Parties and the Return to Democracy in the Southern Cone,"* (September, 1985). https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/wp170_peronism_and_radicalism._argentinas_transition_in_perspective.pdf

[170] Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Peronism and Radicalism: Argentina's Transition in Perspective," *Paper prepared for the conference "Political Parties and the Return to Democracy in the Southern Cone,"* (September, 1985). https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/wp170_peronism_and_radicalism._argentinas_transition_in_perspective.pdf

[171] Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Peronism and Radicalism: Argentina's Transition in Perspective," *Paper prepared for the conference "Political Parties and the Return to Democracy in the Southern Cone,"* (September, 1985). https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/publication/wp170_peronism_and_radicalism._argentinas_transition_in_perspective.pdf

since the 1940s until 1974 demonstrates the numerous ruptures and ideological shifts both movements have experienced, and even points to rare cases of cooperation between the two sides. Argentina's complex and intricate political history is an example of the drastic changes a political culture undergoes once populist movements become injected into mainstream political theaters. The entire Argentinian culture accommodated and molded itself around the new political identities born in 1946. Parties and ideologies across the political spectrum fused together and tore themselves apart both within and outside Peronism.

The Peronist base is not bound by ideology but by an allusion to Perón and power, to the glory of the past. It is not ideologically-based as elements from both the extreme right and left have co-existed alongside each other inside the Peronist umbrella. Peronism is a discursive frame that has evolved over time; at the center of its narrative creation lies Perón and the ever-present battle of "us vs. them." This is demonstrated by the constant ideological shifts and ruptures that the Peronist bloc underwent since its inception in 1943 until 1974. Peronism is not static and should rather be understood as a dynamic force that moves all across the ideological spectrum. The same reality can be seen in the anti-Peronist movement.

Argentinian politics are a matter of constant negotiation across the political spectrum, and are ultimately dictated by the Peronist and anti-Peronist divide. It is critical to remember that these political allegiances are not permanent though, as showcased by the Church's and Army's change in attitude towards Perón which ultimately led to his ousting, or Frondizi's eventual shift to Peronism. However, despite these alterations in party association, intra-cleavage alliances are much more common than inter-cleavage ones (e.g. it is less likely for cooperation or party switching to happen across the Peronist/anti-Peronist divide as sociocultural differences between the groups is too big to

bridge the gap).[172] The left and right of Peronism are not like the left and right of Anti-Peronism. As such, they will continue to battle for dominance within their own ranks and outside of them after Argentina's return to democracy in 1983.

How can anyone truly label Argentina as a country of either explicitly the left or right? Such titles do not capture the sheer complexity that exists within the networks and alliances which make up the Argentinian political realm. Neither Peronism nor anti-Peronism are defined in left-right terms; the two sides cannot be ordered, by analysts or scholars, as left or right of one another, as can be done for example with (most of) the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in the U.S.[173] The Peronist-centered dichotomy ultimately controls Argentinian politics and establishes the lines political and non-political actors alike have to navigate. The following chapter explores the more contemporaneous consequences of this reality from 1983 up until 2019.

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[172] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[173] Pierre Ostiguy, "Peronism and Anti-Peronism: Class-Cultural Cleavages and Political Identity in Argentina," University of California, Berkeley, (1998). https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/peronism-anti-class-cultural-cleavages-political/docview/304433044/se-2?accountid=8361.

Chapter Four: Contemporary Peronism

The Argentinian political theater continued to be defined along lines demarcated by the Peronist/anti-Peronist divide even in the aftermath of the nation's last military *junta*. After Perón's presidential victory in 1973, his subsequent death in 1974, and his wife Isabel Perón's ousting by the military, Argentina experienced one of the most brutal dictatorships in Latin American history. Perón passed on July 1, 1974, and was succeeded by his then vice-president and wife Isabel; under her rule, terrorism worsened, divisions festered, and the economy suffered.[174] These conditions created an environment ripe for military takeover as the Argentine people craved law and order above all and hoped for a return to stable governance. It has been commonplace in Argentina for the military to assume control once a civilian government has been deemed unfit to rule. As a result, when the armed forces ousted Isabel and invaded the Argentinian political apparatus, there was "a national sigh of relief."[175]

The military *junta* initially presented itself as a reformist machine hoping to fix Argentina. These reforms quickly morphed into non-target specific state violence "justified" under the guise of snuffing out subversion. The *junta* turned disappearances into a government policy and in doing so gave new meaning to the concept of state terrorism.[176] From the years 1974-1983, Argentinians all across the board and the political spectrum underwent brutal repression and violent disappearances. This period of time wholly altered the Argentinian national consciousnesses as an estimated 30,000 people were killed or forcefully disappeared.[177] Spaces for political participation were virtually

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[174] Edward Schumacher, "Argentina and Democracy," Foreign Affairs, (Summer, 1984). DOI: 10.2307/20041999.

[175] Edward Schumacher, "Argentina and Democracy," Foreign Affairs, (Summer, 1984). DOI: 10.2307/20041999.

[176] Iain Guest, *Behind the disappearances: Argentina's Dirty War Against Human Rights and the United Nations*, Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999. (32, 34,38).

[177] These numbers are assumed to be a sized down version of actual casualty figures. BBC News, "Argentina Dirty War: Torture and baby theft trial under way," *BBC News,* (October, 2020). https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-54718440#:~:text=After%20a%20military%20junta%20led,campaign%20came%20to%20be%20known.

destroyed and the nation became a husk of what it once had been as every dimension of life corroded under the *junta's* touch.

Argentina's democracy was swallowed whole by a fearmongering, power-hungry military government that propagated its own demise. In 1983, however, free and fair elections were reinstituted which allowed for political parties to launch fierce campaigns against the regime. Once the election campaigns started, the crucial competition was between Peronists and Radicals.[178] Political clashes were once more made on the Peronist and anti-Peronist arena. This has been the nucleus of Argentinian politics since the 1940s and continues to be the main definer of political allegiances in the status quo. Since the country's return to democracy, the Peronist front has experienced a series of deep-seated alterations; similar metamorphoses can be studied in the anti-Peronist bloc. The constant shifts and ever-changing nature of political alliances in the Argentinian political theater has created a reality where labels of left and right are rendered useless in the realm of political analysis. Even though "left" and "right" carry normative standards that Argentinians utilize to create political identities, these are firstly and inherently born as a result of the Peronist and anti-Peronist divide. Elements of both the extreme left and right have existed within and outside both movements; neither is exclusively limited to either side of the left-right ideological dichotomy. The following chapter focuses on this reality and on the changes the antithetical relationship between Peronism and its main challengers have experienced since Argentina's return to democracy.

Argentina's re-democratization process

During the military *junta's* reign Argentina's democratic political apparatus was cracked open, violated, and ultimately left to bleed out. Thus, in the aftermath of the armed forces' ousting, the nation had to embark on a journey to mend itself back together. Argentinians had to pick from the

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[178] Scott Mainwaring and Eduardo J. Viola, "Transitions to Democracy: Brazil and Argentina in the 1980s," *Journal of International Affairs,* Vol. 38, No. (Winter, 1985), pp. 193-219. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24356910

gore and ruin that plagued every dimension of life and establish a skeleton framework upon which

to let democracy stand. This near-impossible endeavor was marked by a re-institution of political

participation through free and fair elections. The consequential mobilization defined whether or not

parties could gain power as Argentina's return to democracy led to the re-structuring of party

hierarchies and alliances. The entire system had been destroyed; leaders, therefore, navigated the

wreckage and chose allies on the basis of electoral survival. Parties all across the ideological

spectrum had suffered under the military regime, none had been spared. This presented an

opportunity for Argentinians to break away from the ever-dominating political divide of Peronism

and anti-Peronism. Yet, the chance passed and soon enough politics continued to be defined by the

antagonist relationship between the Peronist and anti-Peronist bloc.

Within Argentina's newly re-born democratic project, two parties became the sole viable

electoral options in the system: *Radicalismo* (Radicalism, UCR) and *Justicialismo* (Peronism, PJ). The

latter were the only factions inside the political theater that managed to adapt and garner enough

support to mobilize voters. Marxist/Socialists parties such as the new Trotskyite Movement to

Socialism (*Movimiento al Socialismo*, MAS) achieved limited success in the 1980s; while national right-

wing parties like *Carapintadas* (Painted Faces) positioned themselves as "anti-populist" and enjoyed

the finite backing of the business community but were not popular enough.[179] Parties that were

exclusively of the right or the left did not attain the necessary levels of influence and mobilization to

survive the nation's tumultuous return to democracy. As such, more extreme elements of both

progressivism and conservatism were confined to the margins of the political theater or were

adopted under the Peronist and/or anti-Peronist umbrella.

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[179] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

Peronism, on the other hand, melded itself and adopted new hierarchal structures to be accepted as a legitimate pro-democracy party. The old movement, accompanied by its authoritarian-esque past and tense relationship with democracy, abandoned the feature that had marked its initial existence: a rigid hierarchy and unquestioning loyalty to one's superiors.[180] Radicalism additionally underwent changes of its own. The movement experienced a renewal due to the initiatives of Raúl Alfonsín. A modernizer and reformer, Alfonsín challenged the leadership of Radical leader Ricardo Balbín as Balbín's decision to reconcile with Perón during the *Hora del Pueblo* agreement of 1970 pushed the presidential candidate and younger party members to seek reform within the anti-Peronist ranks of the UCR; these changes manifested in the creation of the *Movimiento Renovador Nacional* (National Renewal Movement, MRN).[181] Alfonsín disapproval of his party's trajectory led to the creation of more left-leaning spaces. The MNR summoned the most progressive sectors of the UCR and allowed them to compete internally against the party's conservative side, headed by Balbín.[182] During 1972 and beyond Alfonsín's presidency (which began in 1983), the UCR housed traditional and progressive elements, which competed with one another to gain control over the party. This level of coexistence between different sides of the traditionally conceptualized ideological spectrum points to the heterogeneity of viewpoints to be found within the UCR—and Argentinian political parties in general. The diversity inside anti-Peronist parties who could compete against Peronism continued to shift and ultimately reached a complex convergence point during the Alliance between UCR and FREPASO (*Frente País Solidario*, Front for a Country in Solidarity) in the 1990s.

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[180] Luis Alberto Romero, "The Process, 1976-1983," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

[181] Andrés Alberto Masi, *Los tiempos de Alfonsín,* Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Capital Intelectual (2014).

[182] Pablo Ponza, "Alfonsín: Ideas Políticas Antes y Después de su Presidencia," *América Latina y la cultura impresa: revistas culturales de los siglos XX y XXI,* (2021). http://cvl.bdigital.uncu.edu.ar/objetos_digitales/16767/america-latina-y-la-cultura-impresa.pdf#page=33

In 1983, most observers anticipated a Peronist electoral victory.[183] Historical precedence, its high levels of popular support, and the movement's dependence on the myth of Perón gave the Peronists a plethora of advantages. Many additionally believed that union strength—which had guaranteed Peronism's success in the past—would ensure the Peronist contender's victory. In a surprising turn of events, however, and in spite of these predications, Raúl Alfonsín won the presidential elections. A Radical intellectual and member of the *Unión Cívica Radical* (UCR/Radicals), Alfonsín handed the Peronists their first defeat in a free election.[184] His administration focused heavily on re-building Argentina's democracy, strengthening the rule of law, and on addressing the horrifying human rights abuses that had been carried out by *junta.* Alfonsín's Radicals adopted many of the left's proposals, pushed for a return to academic life, and encouraged the reentrance of intellectuals into the political arena.[185] His style and candor represented a juncture in traditional Radical thought as more progressive ideas were adopted during his time in office.

The anti-populist rhetoric communicated by the Alfonsín government—both implicitly and explicitly—rested upon rebuilding Argentina's destroyed democratic apparatus. Thus, the main and strongest faction of the anti-Peronist front in the 1980s stood as a strong defender of democratic institutions. Ideas, plans, and policies expressed and promoted by Alfonsín and his allies underlined the importance of protecting neoliberal democracy. Their methods of political communication and alliance-building aligns with the definitions of anti-populism presented in Chapter Two. Anti-populist blocs are contingent upon a hostile attitude towards populism, a desire to defend established norms and institutions, and a movement makeup that is inherently ideologically diverse (as the anti-populist group is built in temporary alliances of opposition to populism).

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[183] Daniel K. Lewis, *History of Argentina*, Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Incorporated, (2001).
[184] Edward Schumacher, "Argentina and Democracy," *Foreign Affairs,* (Summer, 1984). DOI: 10.2307/20041999.
[185] Luis Alberto Romero, "Advance and Retreat, 1983-1989," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

Yet, even though Radicalism experienced high levels of support in the mid-1980s, the euphoric return to civilian governance eventually waned into commonplace skepticism for the constant failures that plagued the political system. The Argentinian democratic project remained shrouded in shadows as the UCR and Peronism realigned themselves against the backdrop of skyrocketing inflation and an ever-worsening economic crisis. Rebuilding democratic infrastructure was not an easy endeavor and the populist power resurgence under Carlos Menem—after a restructuring of the internal hierarchy of Peronism itself—led to the establishment of a damaging cycle of democratic institutional erosion, further alienating Argentinians from the political realm.

Peronism and democracy: a fluid paradox

Between 1989 and 1995, the UCR went through a steady period of electoral failure as Peronism consistently defeated it in five straight national elections: two presidential, two mid-term, and one constituent ballot.[186] These losses were multicausal and stemmed from an array of sources. On the one hand, the nation continued to sink under the weight of a) the burden of rebuilding an entire democratic system and b) the growing economic crisis. On the other, the Peronist movement's restructuring led to an absolute ideological shift unlike ones previously discussed in this project. The Peronist front underwent a series of rapid and shocking changes that ultimately altered the party's foundation, their policy proposals, and the ways in which union leaders (the backbone of the Peronist movement) interacted with the PJ.

Populist movements are volatile and do not adhere to the traditional confines inherently found in both ideology or history. Even when a populist bloc has decades of historical alliances/commitments with certain societal factions, both internal and external conditions can result in a complete rearrangement of the relationship between leader and their constituents. This is

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[186] Andrés Malamud, "Winning Elections versus Governing: A Two-Tier Approach to Party Adaptation in Argentina, 1983-2003," *Academia*, (January, 2005).

because "the people" of populism are an invention, a collective phantasmagorical subject; the point of convergence for Peronist leaders has always been and continues to be their belief that they act in the name of the people, and in doing so they nurture an almost limitless audacity to modify the itinerary of their policies.[187] The empty signifier of "the people" is highly malleable and can be modified on the whims of a movement's leadership. Legitimized populism additionally leads to the creation of a new social contract between leader and *demos*, one wherein the former can bypass previously-made movement promises, the left-right ideological spectrum, and democratic institutions. This reality can be seen in the rise to power of Peronist President Carlos Menem.

Radicalism's electoral victories in 1983 and 1985 injected mounting pressure into a scrambling Peronist movement. What had once been a unified front buckled under the strain of defeat and as a such, fractures became an ever-accelerated threat to the survival of Peronist thought. The center of Peronist identity from 1945 and 1989 had been heavily linked to class-based struggle and relied on a rigid hierarchy of power. Even though Peronist alliances adapted greatly after Perón's ousting—and later his death—Peronism before Menem was marked by a series of a common themes. In the pre-Menem world, there were a number of key elements within the Peronist core including: representation of the poor and the workers, a strong defense of the corporatist social order in which unions and the military played a central role in the political and economic arena, an abrasion to the international order, and the exclusion of its "enemies."[188] A tendency to cut across either the left and right may have been common for Peronism, however, a deviation from these generally-accepted components was not. Beginning in 1983, Peronism underwent a far-reaching process of de-unionization as reformers dismantled Peronism's mechanisms of labor participation,

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[187] David E. Leaman, "Populist Liberalism as. Dominant Ideology: Competing Ideas and Democracy in Post-Authoritarian Argentina, 1989-1995," *Studies in Comparative International Development,* 34, (1999). https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02687629
[188] Celia Szusterman, "Carlos Saúl Menem: variations on the theme of populism," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* 19, (2000) 193-206. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1470-9856.2000.tb00099.x

and clientelist networks gradually replaced the party's union-based linkages to the working and lower classes.[189] These changes began to become evident in 1987, when the *Renovadores* (Renovators), a group led by Antonio Cafiero (which included Menem) realized the growing need to modernize Peronism.[190] The group focused on reforming the Peronist party, PJ, and make it more compatible with democracy.

Reforms were meant to distance the movement from its authoritarian past and tendencies. The hierarchical structure of the Peronism, wherein decision-making was highly centralized and defined primarily by the leader, chafed with the pluralist propensities of democracy. Many thus believed that Peronism had to become a legitimate party, yet those in *Renovadores* leadership positions had a burden of proof that proved too heavy for many. Those wanting to renovate Peronism needed to a) show that they were the real Peronists after the death of Perón and b) demonstrate they were not completely breaking with Peronist tradition while simultaneously changing the movement's makeup.[191] A fissure arose from disagreements in relation to how to achieve the aforementioned goals. Carlos Menem, a member of the group, defended the unity of Peronism, including the authoritarian old guard, while Antonio Cafiero—the *Renovadores* leader—argued that formal unity with those sections was worthless; thus, Menem became Cafiero's main opponent within Peronism.[192]

As the presidential elections approached, Menem sought to posit himself as a "true" representative of the people. In order to do so, Menem fully embraced the populist discursive frame

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[189] Steven Levitsky, "From Labor Politics to Machine Politics: The Transformation of Party-Union Linkages in Argentine Peronism, 1983-1999," *Latin American Research Review*, 38 (3), (2003). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.2003.0038

[190] Celia Szusterman, "Carlos Saúl Menem: variations on the theme of populism," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* 19, (2000) 193-206. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1470-9856.2000.tb00099.x

[191] Sebastian Barros, "The Discursive Continuities of the Menemist Rupture," *Panizza (ed) Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, (2005).

[192] Sebastian Barros, "The Discursive Continuities of the Menemist Rupture," *Panizza (ed) Populism and the Mirror of Democracy*, (2005).

for performing politics. He combined violent groups from the Peronist right and left, orthodox

Peronists, and all the "leftover" electoral players from which Cafiero did not approve.[193] His was an

"antielite" group that provided him with a diverse electorate, including trade-union leaders spurned

by Cafiero and local political bosses displaced by the *Renovadores,* as he promised a return to the

paradise of the welfare state through a *salariazo.*[194] He even managed to pull support from the anti-

Peronist flank as well. The *Carapintadas* (which had previously presented itself as an anti-populist

group) became part of Menem's vast electoral campaign coalition and even offered to take up arms

to defend a Menem Peronist victory at the polls in 1989.[195] Menem's ascension within Peronism not

only represented the further fracturing of the traditional coalition, but additionally characterized the

movement's sharp turn to the right of the ideological spectrum.

      As a candidate, he lost votes to the left (mainly FREPASO) while he gained the support of

more rightist factions of Radicalism.[196] Additionally, beginning in 1983, union power and influence

over the Peronist bloc weakened as they were actively pushed to the margins. This marginalization

stemmed from the belief that a Peronism thoroughly subordinated to union leaders would be unable

to attract many votes from outside the working class; subsequently, when Peronism split, both

Cafiero and Menem represented the non-union sector of the Peronist movement.[197] Peronist

rhetoric had evolved, further demonstrating the movement's lack of attachment to an ideological

base. Once in office, Menem put these ideas into practice, walked back many of his election

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[193] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[194] *Salariazo* refers to "great wage hikes." Luis Alberto Romero, "Advance and Retreat, 1983-1989," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

[195] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[196] Carlos Gervasoni, "Del Distribucionismo al Neoliberalismo: Los Cambios en la Coalición Electoral Peronista durante el Gobierno de Menem," *Latin American Studies Association*, (1998). http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/lasa98/Gervasoni.pdf

[197] James W. McGuire, "Union Political Tactics and Democratic Consolidation in Alfonsin's Argentina, 1983-1989," *Latin American Research Review,* 27 (1), (1992). Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/2503717

promises, and instituted a neoliberal agenda that turned unions into mere shadows of what they had once been.

Carlos Menem defeated Cafiero during Peronist internal elections and in 1989, secured a victory against the Radical presidential candidate. Once in office, Menem decisively ventured away from the Peronist creed. As president, he divided the labor movement and promoted a neoliberal economic agenda based on the tenets of the Washington Consensus.[198] Menem's political objectives centered around stabilizing the economy and mitigating the damage caused by inflation. The PJ under Menem became a meld of liberal-conservativism; the party promoted privatization and deregulation, weakened its alliance with the unions, and sought new support in the national center-right parties, the armed forces and the conservative sectors of the Catholic Church.[199] As previously established, in the pre-Menem era, Peronism adhered to a set of key principles surrounding the role of the leader and state in regards to the economy. These tenets became flexible under "Menenism" as Menem diversified the Peronist electorate while marginalizing the movement's once-strongest supporter and becoming a close ally of the United States. Menem's strain of Peronism sought a political consensus in an alliance of competitive capitalists (this time agrarian as well as industrial), with the poorest sectors of the urban population, and the multi-class clientelistic bases in marginal provinces.[200] This conglomeration of contradicting elements was only possible due to Peronism's chameleonic nature; as a discursive frame of politics, Peronism could essentially move on a trajectory of its creation, as long as it alluded to the myth of Perón, housed a charismatic leader, romanticized the past, and promoted nationalism on some level or another.

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[198] Noam Lupu and Susan C. Stokes, "The Social Bases of Political Parties in Argentina, 1912-2003," *Latin American Research Review,* Vol. 44, No. 1 (2009), pp. 58-87. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20488169
[199] Carlos Gervasoni, "Del Distribucionismo al Neoliberalismo: Los Cambios en la Coalición Electoral Peronista durante el Gobierno de Menem," *Latin American Studies Association*, (1998). http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/lasa98/Gervasoni.pdf
[200] Celia Szusterman, "Carlos Saúl Menem: variations on the theme of populism," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* 19, (2000) 193-206. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1470-9856.2000.tb00099.x

Even though the economy managed to gain steady footing during Menem's years in office, democratic institutions suffered greatly. In this regard, he did remain faithful to the Peronist tradition, as he either neglected institutions or sought to manipulate them in pursuit of his central goal: to remain in power.[201] Damaging institutional strength came in the form of court-packing and constitutional reforms. The aforementioned two were connected as court-packing would theoretically enable Menem to rewrite the constitutional limits on reelections if he managed to acquire enough popular support. In 1990, he had obtained legislation to increase the size of the Supreme Court from five to nine, and due to a number of resignations he had been able to fill six of the nine places on the Court.[202] Following traditional populist thought, Menem presented himself as the physical manifestation of "the people's" will and therefore did not care for checks and balances or the separation of powers needed for democracies to function. In the end, his political machinations backfired as a result of internal tensions and conflicts within Peronism. Governor Eduardo Duhalde, a Peronist who sought the presidential nomination among other Peronists, felt compelled to seek a popular referendum to prevent Menem from seeking a third term; they did so as they did not believe in the Court's ability to uphold the Constitution.[203] Menem's defeat did not come as a direct result of the damage to the former Peronist base (unions and the working class) but rather as a consequence of inner movement clashes.

Peronism had changed drastically under Menem's two terms as president. The movement fractured on the issue of party reform and as a result moved to the right of the ideological spectrum. Menem's promises during the campaign trail focused on a return to Argentina's welfare state,

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[201] Celia Szusterman, "Carlos Saúl Menem: variations on the theme of populism," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* 19, (2000) 193-206. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1470-9856.2000.tb00099.x
[202] Jonathan M. Miller, "Evaluating the Argentine Supreme Court Under Presidents Alfonsín and Menem (1983-199)," *Southwestern Journal of Law and Trade in the Americas*, (2000) 369-434. https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/sjlta7&div=20&id=&page=
[203] Jonathan M. Miller, "Evaluating the Argentine Supreme Court Under Presidents Alfonsín and Menem (1983-199)," *Southwestern Journal of Law and Trade in the Americas*, (2000) 369-434. https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/sjlta7&div=20&id=&page=

increasing worker wages, and stabilizing the economy. Yet, once in office, Peronism underwent

shocking metamorphoses as unions became further marginalized and Menem welcomed elements of

the Peronist old guard such the extreme right, the Army, and the Church. And even though

Menem's neoliberal policies and alliances with big businesses (and other historical enemies of

Peronism) were predicted to lead to a decrease in traditional lower-class support, Peronism managed

to retain that electorate faction.[204] Although this may seem contradictory, it is critical to remember

that as a frame of politics—and not an ideology—Peronism appeals to its voters through a

challenging of institutions, norms, and the decorum expected in politics. Understood as a "frame,"

populism encompasses every aspect that affects political voter calculation including socio-cultural

dimensions. The key to Menem's electoral support among the lower-strata of society was his

capacity to remain "Peronist."[205] Framing politics as the continuation and maintenance of Peronism

guaranteed his victories. However, growing internal divisions within the Peronist flank left the

movement in disarray and in 1999, the UCR won the Argentinian presidential elections.

La Alianza

During the Menem years, Radicalism managed to find new methods to survive its party

fraying, mostly through power-bargaining and alliance-making within the anti-Peronist bloc.

Beginning in 1995, the UCR and FREPASO, two anti-Peronist parties, began coordinating the terms

of formal alliance despite their differences. The nucleus of FREPASO came from a left-of-center

group that had split off from Peronism in 1991 (the Group of Eight) which later turned into *Frente*

Grande (FG), a vocal critic of Menem; FG—which would eventually become FREPASO—based its

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[204] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009).
https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf
[205] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009).
https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

appeal on republicanism and political liberalism, that is, respect for the division of powers, judicial independence, and clean government.[206] Due to these values, FREPASO aligned well with UCR. Upon realizing the parties' potential for electoral success once they combined their efforts, UCR and FREPASO created a unified front against PJ in the form of a coalition labeled *Alianza* (Alliance). Party calculations for the alliance were made along the lines demarcated by the Peronist and anti-Peronist divide, as opposed to the left/right dichotomy. Although UCR and FREPASO shared a propensity toward the left side of the ideological spectrum, the goals that united the two centered around defeating the Peronist movement and ensuring their own party's survival. In this case, *Alianza* fits under the definition of anti-populism presented in Chapter Two as it is a "mix of ideological and strategic bedfellows pulled together in a temporary alliance of opposition to populism.[207] The anti-Peronist coalition gave space to rhetoric, ideas, and societal elements that sought to postulate themselves in radical opposition to Menem's populism.

Under Menem, the progressive middle classes had been left out and it was among them that *Alianza* found its constituency.[208] Those wishing to protect democratic institutions viewed Menem as an aberration of the political system, as a demagogue who had debilitated a near-nonexistent democratic apparatus. One of Menem's most pointed legacies was a marked decline in public trust and political institutions, as a lack of transparency, a series of corruption scandals, and his court-packing schemes created a perception of widespread abuses of power.[209] *Alianza* provided those discontented voters with an alternative to the status quo, one that promised a respect for democracy

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[206] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[207] Benjamin Moffitt, "The Populism/Anti-Populism Divide in Western Europe," *Democratic Theory*, (December 2018), DOI:10.3167/dt.2018.050202

[208] Celia Szusterman, "Carlos Saúl Menem: variations on the theme of populism," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* 19, (2000) 193-206. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1470-9856.2000.tb00099.x

[209] Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo, "Argentina Weathers the Storm," *Journal of Democracy*, 14(4), (2003). https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.008

and a strong dose of social equality in order to correct the sharp inequalities occasioned by the neoliberal economic regime.[210] Governing with Peronism as the opposing force has never been an easy endeavor. During the *Alianza* government's years in power (1999-2001), after the victory of presidential election and UCR member Fernando de la Rúa in 1999, the Peronists became a violent thorn at democracy's side. The Peronists enjoyed a sizable representation in Argentina's chamber of deputies, where Alianza held a bare majority, and above all controlled the Senate.[211] As a result, the Peronists who had managed to siphon a bit of control over the system, exercised a highly obstructionist policy. Yet it was not the schemes of Peronism that sealed the coffin of the *Alianza* government but the economy.

The anti-Peronist alliance had inherited an economy teetering on the edge of a precipice and struggled to find a feasible plan to prevent it from crashing. To make matter worse, the economic and political ideas of De la Rúa were contrary to those of the majority of the UCR party structure. While the president was a worshiper of conservative thought and neoliberal ideology, Alfonsín and other important radicals were prone to Keynesianism, state intervention and the protection of the internal markets, which often led to tensions within the party.[212] While in power, *Alianza* continuously cut across the ideological spectrum in order to reach agreements inside its own ranks. This level of party inner-negotiation and compromise resulted in a bypassing of the traditional left and right. Moving beyond the left-right dichotomy was accepted as a valid method of practicing politics, and not seen as ideological betrayal if it meant defeating Peronism. However, despite the appeal of the *Alianza's* plans, this conglomeration of anti-Peronist interests did not manage to stay in power for long as a perpetual recession sunk its claws into the nation.

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[210] Luis Alberto Romero, "Postscript: January 2002," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

[211] Luis Alberto Romero, "Postscript: January 2002," in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, University Park, Pa: Penn State University Press, (2002).

[212] Julián Zícari, *Camino al colapso: Cómo llegamos los argentinos al 2001,* Ediciones El Continente (2018).

Peronism and Crisis

In 2001, the Argentinian economy collapsed on itself. This vicious crash, which had been threatening the survival de la Rúa administration, led to fatal unrest and the eventual resignation of the president and his cabinet. In the coming months, Argentina underwent serial handovers of executive power—including three different interim presidents—that ensued until a special session of Congress in 2002, which chose leading Peronist senator Eduardo Duhalde to take office for two years.[213] The economic crisis continued under his leadership and growing levels of instability pushed the nation's democracy to the verge of absolute collapse. Extensive public hostility toward the political elite raised the specter of full-scale party-system collapse and the rise of an anti-establishment outsider.[214] These conditions created ripe ground for the continued perpetuation of populist rule. As mentioned in Chapter One, crisis is both an internal and external condition of populist rule.

However, this would only be possible if the PJ managed to get its affairs in order. The party itself lay in near-shambles, divided between Menem and Duhalde who fought to maintain control over the movement. After years of bitter rivalry and desperate for a candidate to defeat Menem, Duhalde turned to Néstor Kirchner, a little-known governor who had been one of the few Peronists to oppose Menem throughout the 1990s; once accepted as a nominee (along Menem and ex-interim president Adolfo Rodríguez Saá), Kirchner positioned himself as a modern progressive, adopting a center-left "neo-Keynesian" platform.[215] Within the PJ ticket, Menem, Kirchner and Rodríguez Saá represented different and contradicting sides of the left-right ideological spectrum yet operated

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[213] Hector E. Schamis, "Argentina: Crisis and Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy*, 13 (2), (2002), 81-94. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2002.0030

[214] Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo, "Argentina Weathers the Storm," *Journal of Democracy*, 14(4), (2003). https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.008

[215] Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo, "Argentina Weathers the Storm," *Journal of Democracy*, 14(4), (2003). https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.008

under the same Peronist umbrella. Menem personified the right and continued to promote his free-market, neoliberal reforms, while Rodríguez Saá cast himself a traditional Peronist with a national and populist appeal.[216] Despite the PJ's history of incorporating a wide range of ideological viewpoints and managing to present a unified electoral front, this was the first time since its creation that the Peronist party contested the general elections divided.[217] The unusual and paradoxical level of competition within this party front underscores the general hypothesis of this thesis project: Peronism is not ideologically bound, but rather bound by an allusion to and desire for power. There are no contractual promises to either the right or the left within Peronism. Even as the movement deviated to the left under Kirchner, this truth continued to mark the Peronist flanks.

The Radicals experienced similar levels of disarray. De la Rúa's depressing performance left the UCR in an extremely debilitated state and fostered the flight from its ranks of two relevant figures: former minister Ricardo López Murphy and congresswoman Elisa Carrió, both of whom created new political formations to run for the presidency.[218] Neither won the election, yet their retreat from Radicalism smeared the UCR beyond repair as the party's own candidate performed poorly during his campaign. The electoral defeat punctured the UCR's last functioning lung and forced it to withdraw into the shadows, gasping for air, longing for a return to what it once had been.

All in all, the 2003 elections cracked open Argentina's political culture and forced it to reassemble. Since the 1940s, the political scene had been dominated by the Radical-Peronist twosome; this ultimately shattered as a result of the Radical party's effective dissolution at the

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[216] Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo, "Argentina Weathers the Storm," *Journal of Democracy*, 14(4), (2003). https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2003.008

[217] Omar Sanchez, "Argentina's Landmark 2003 Presidential Election: Renewal and Continuity," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* Vol. 24, No. 4 (Oct., 2005), pp. 454-475. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27733800

[218] Omar Sanchez, "Argentina's Landmark 2003 Presidential Election: Renewal and Continuity," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* Vol. 24, No. 4 (Oct., 2005), pp. 454-475. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27733800

national level and the emergence of a polarized multi-party system.[219] Yet, despite these shocking

and deep-seated changes, political clashes continued to be made on the Peronist/anti-Peronist arena.

Political calculations—in relation to both leader strategies and voter identity formation—were first

and foremost defined by people's relationship to populism and anti-populism.

From Kirchner to Kirchner: *kirchnerismo*

Under the Kirchner regime—which lasted twelve years—Peronism evolved once more and

came to be known as *kirchnerismo*. From his inauguration in 2003 onwards, Kirchner embarked on a

campaign to create a new Peronist identity, once which drew upon the myth of Perón to garner and

maintain popular support. This strain of Peronism was further sensationalized after his passing in

2010, and continued to grow under the leadership of his wife Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

Claudio Katz, Argentinian author and professor of economics at the University of Buenos Aires,

outlined three key components that make up *kirchnerismo*:

1. The reconstruction of a capitalist State.

2. A neo-populist regime.

3. A government of the center-left.[220]

Kirchner's goal was to restructure the expectations of the Argentinian populace in relation to

the role of the state, which had changed drastically under the Menem presidency. From the

beginning of his mandate, he sought to articulate a "transversal" movement that included

progressive or center-left forces, thus widening the margins of the alliance with the PJ's Duhalde

apparatus.[221] Internal fractures had had devastating impacts on the Peronist flank during the

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[219] Omar Sanchez, "Argentina's Landmark 2003 Presidential Election: Renewal and Continuity," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* Vol. 24, No. 4 (Oct., 2005), pp. 454-475. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27733800

[220] Claudio Katz, "Anatomía del kirchnerismo," *Rebelión,* (2013). https://fisyp.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/media/uploads/anatomia.pdf

[221] Ana Soledad Montero y Lucía Vincent, "Del 'peronismo impuro' al 'kirchnerismo puro': la construcción de una nueva identidad política durante la presidencia de Néstor Kirchner en Argentina (2003-2007)," *Postdata,* 18(1), (2013). http://www.scielo.org.ar/scielo.php?pid=S1851-96012013000100005&script=sci_arttext&tlng=pt

elections. Consequently, Kirchner attempted to bypass one of Peronism's original sins: its insatiable desire for power. The hierarchy of the movement itself had been created to ensure constant and unquestionable centralization of executive power. This consolidation oftentimes grated against the interests of other powerful factions within the Peronist bloc. As seen throughout this histography, when in government, Peronism tends to behave as a political regime all by itself: thus, government and opposition coexist within the PJ.[222] Even though he had managed to secure a wide range of support during the 2003 elections, competition between two different camps of Peronism came to head in 2005. Néstor Kirchner's proxy victory over Eduardo Duhalde (as Kirchner's wife had defeated Duhalde's during the senatorial elections) cemented his absolute control over the Justicialist Party throughout the country, and by extension over the Argentine political system given the large majorities held by the party in the national Senate and the Chamber of Deputies.[223] This level of contradictory and tense internal competition within Peronism and anti-Peronism had severe consequences for the country as it complicated the anti-Peronist bloc's ability to mobilize successfully.

Peronism's near-absolute control of the Argentinian political apparatus continued to manifest itself in 2007. Since their defeat in 2003, anti-Peronist factions stayed fragmented and scattered all across the ideological spectrum. Subsequently, they did not manage to amass enough votes to defeat Kirchner's wife Cristina. Kirchner's presidential victory was, in part, due to the opposition's weakness. The UCR had been grossly debilitated and under Néstor, five of the UCR's six governors and more than a third of its 476 rejected the Radical leadership and instead backed the

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[222] Celia Szusterman, "Carlos Saúl Menem: variations on the theme of populism," *Bulletin of Latin American Research,* 19, (2000) 193-206. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.1470-9856.2000.tb00099.x

[223] Mark P. Jones, and Juan Pablo Micozzi, "From Néstor to Cristina: Argentina and the Kirchners," *Global Dialogue* 10, (2008): 90-96. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/néstor-cristina-argentina-kirchners/docview/211504882/se-2?accountid=8361.

government, earning the label "K Radicals."[224] Traditional party betrayal of this magnitude should be noted for two different reasons: the latter 1) further incapacitated the anti-Peronist movement and 2) demonstrated the tenuous nature of alliances made on the basis of the Peronist/anti-Peronist divide. In the aftermath of the 2007 elections, anti-populist forces continued to fracture.

Cristina de Kirchner's two presidencies nearly destroyed the JP and corroded Argentina's democratic institutions. The Kirchners' own political grouping, the *Frente para la Victoria* (FPV, the Front for Victory) was formally part of the Peronist Party but relations between the two organizations were often strained, as the grouping became effectively an autonomous political machine controlled by the Kirchners from the Executive.[225] Additionally, the highest levels of police violence since the return of electoral democracy occurred under the Kirchner governments; moreover, both Néstor and Cristina concentrated power in the executive branch while undercutting institutional checks and balances and utilized Peronist senators/deputies as a way to block any effective oversight.[226] The lack of a credible opposition or serious electoral competition diminished executive accountability even further.[227] Corruption in Kirchner's Argentina turned into an institution in and of itself. Clientelism had always been a tool utilized by the JP to ensure electoral victories, yet Kircher managed to normalize its usage to the point of expectation. Cristina used patronage nominations to build up her political grouping and manipulated her powers of appointment to build up *La Cámpora* as a personal political machine.[228] Political institutions in the

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[224] Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo, "Argentina: From Kirchner to Kirchner," *Journal of Democracy*, 19(2), (April 2008). https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2008.0030

[225] *La Cámpora* had once been a loose network of Peronist militants which evolved into a more institutionalized political grouping, further blurring the distinction between personal and partisan loyalty. Francisco Panizza, "Unpacking patronage: the politics of patronage appointments in Argentina and Uruguay's central administrations," *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, (November 2018). ISSN 1868-4890

[226] Michelle D. Bonner, "What democratic policing is … and is not," *Policing and Society*, 30(9), DOI: 10.1080/10439463.2019.1649405; Luigi Manzetti, "Accountability and Corruption in Argentina during the Kirchner's era," *Latin American Research Review*, 49(2), (2014). https://www.jstor.org/stable/43670178

[227] Steven Levitsky, María Victoria Murillo, "Argentina: From Kirchner to Kirchner," *Journal of Democracy*, 19(2), (April 2008). https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2008.0030

[228] Francisco Panizza, "Unpacking patronage: the politics of patronage appointments in Argentina and Uruguay's central administrations," *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, (November 2018). ISSN 1868-4890

aftermath of the *junta* had never been given an opportunity to become structurally sound; under Kirchner, they never would. As explained in Chapter One, clientelism complicates voters' ability to truly align to either side of the political spectrum. Clientelism may hinder an individual from developing consistent political perceptions either by encouraging indifference toward the ideological left-right spectrum or by increasing uncertainty in the political realm.[229]

The most recent Kirchner administration showcases how fragile democracy in Argentina has become. During Cristina's presidency the state engaged in espionage of political opponents, economic pressure that targeted various governmental entities and bribery that went overlooked/ignored by the judiciary due to subservience on their part.[230] Additionally, the discursive populist tool of "us vs them" allowed Kirchner to move beyond the constraints of judiciary control. The logic of populism transforms politics into an antagonistic confrontation between friends and enemies politicizing almost all social and political spheres and reducing institutional democratic spaces to the opposition.[231] Instead of being respected institutions, those that go against populist leaders/narratives—in this case, the judiciary—get arbitrarily labeled as "the enemy." Cyclical erosion begins and ends with this manipulation of an empty signifier; one that can be filled by anyone who might cross the leader. Kirchner's antagonization of the judicial branch threatened to undermine the rule of law. This reduction of the importance and legitimacy of the judiciary made it so that institutions meant to uphold the law become highly malleable and the introduction of these new norms created a precedent for further abuses in the future. The cycle was bound to begin anew. Yet, after twelve years of Kirchner governance voters turned to the anti-Peronist bloc led by Mauricio Macri, *Cambiemos* (Let's Change) in the 2015 elections. This change represented a critical

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[229] Saskia P. Ruth, "Clientelism and the Utility of the Left-Right Dimension in Latin America," (2016).

[230] Agustino Fontevecchia, "The curse of power in Argentina," Buenos Aires Times, (2020). https://www.batimes.com.ar/news/opinion-and-analysis/the-curse-of-power-in-argentina.phtml

[231] Carlos de la Torre and Felipe Burbano de Lara, "Populism, Constitution Making, and the Rule of Law in Latin America," *Partecipazione & Conflitto*, (2020). http://siba-ese.unisalento.it/index.php/paco/article/view/23057

time for Argentina. Breaking from Peronism opened the doors for a restructuring of the political theater. Could Argentina undergo such an evolution?

Macri: successful anti-Peronist coalition-building

Mauricio Macri's coalition-building project can be considered one of Argentina's most successful anti-Peronist movements since the Peronist inception. *Cambiemos* included Macri's own party, the center-right Republican Proposal (PRO), as well as the historic Radical Civic Union (UCR) and a party that grew out of the country's 2001–02 economic and political crisis, the Civic Coalition (CC) of Elisa Carrió, who had lost to Cristina Kirchner in 2007.[232] This conglomeration of interests represented Argentinians from across the ideological spectrum but pushed the anti-Peronist front decisively to the right. The latter "rightist" turn perhaps points to one of the reasons for the coalition's successes. For the first time in decades, the Argentinian political theater was decisively marked along ideological lines of left and right. This center-right was built in times of predominance of a national-popular center-left, expressed with local particularities by Peronist kirchnerism.[233] Moreover, the establishment of a certain political polarization in terms of left and right would mean an unprecedented legibility of political conflicts and competition in the country, which could provide cognitive shortcuts to voters to establish expectations regarding the policies defended by each space.[234] Under this specific example, one can defend the utilization of labels of left and right in the realm of political analysis. In this particular instance categorizations of left and right—as understood in the traditional academic sense—are telling of a potential evolution in Argentinian politics.

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[232] Noam Lupu, "Latin America's New Turbulence: The End of the Kirchner," *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 27, Number 2, (April 2016), pp. 35-49. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0033

[233] Gabriel Vommaro, "De la construcción partidaria al gobierno: PRO-Cambiemos y los límites del 'giro a la derecha' en Argentina," *Colombia Internacional*, (2019), https://doi.org/10.7440/ colombiaint99.2019.04

[234] Gabriel Vommaro, "De la construcción partidaria al gobierno: PRO-Cambiemos y los límites del 'giro a la derecha' en Argentina," *Colombia Internacional*, (2019), https://doi.org/10.7440/ colombiaint99.2019.04

In 2015, the Peronist and anti-Peronist divide overlapped with the left/right dichotomy more than ever before. Even though both blocs housed contradictory and competing ideological elements, the plans and platforms both alliances presented were ideologically bound. This is perhaps one of the only viable cases wherein labels of left and right paint a fairly accurate picture of the Argentinian political theater. However, it is critical to note that categories of left and right in Latin America manifest differently than in the US or other Global North countries. And although in this particular instance, Argentinian politics were more ideological than in decades past, this "clear-cut" division did not last long.

Macri's coalition aligned itself to the middle and upper classes and promoted neoliberal reform. *Cambiemos* was set on reversing the damage perpetuated by Kirchner governments; the state no longer answered to anyone, not even its own branches. Macri portrayed himself as a pragmatist who could manage bureaucrats and get things done while additionally taking great pains to reassure voters that they would not lose their welfare benefits or subsidized utilities under his administration.[235] Anti-Peronist rhetoric centered around transparency and the rebuilding of critical democratic infrastructure. During the campaign, Macri managed to mobilize different sectors of the Argentinian electorate and in 2015, *Cambiemos* politically destroyed every single one of Peronism's top-tier potential 2019 presidential candidates by defeating them on their home turn, leaving the Peronist movement leaderless and rudderless.[236] Despite this historic victory, Peronism did not stay down. Ruling as the incumbent with Peronism in opposition is a near-impossible endeavor and the Macri administration was thus plagued with clashes against JP, an ever-worsening economic crisis, and an eventual defeat in the 2019 presidential elections.

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[235] Noam Lupu, "Latin America's New Turbulence: The End of the Kirchner*," Journal of Democracy*, Volume 27, Number 2, (April 2016), pp. 35-49. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2016.0033
[236] Mark P. Jones, "The Consolidation of the Macri Era: It's Morning in Argentina," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (October 2017). https://www.csis.org/analysis/consolidation-macri-era-its-morning-argentina

Conclusion: what's next?

Since the 1940s, Argentina has broken away from traditional political conceptualizations and subverted political calculations/predictions. To call her a country of either the left or right is a gross understatement of the complexities that makeup her political reality. The left-right dichotomy is a necessary and useful analytical tool in the realm of politics. However, its lack of precision or nuance leaves much to be desired in countries wherein populism has been injected into the mainstream political theater. The LR model can continue to provide scholars with a basic understanding of politics yet it should not be the end-all-be-all of comparative analyses. The divide is naught but a skeleton framework; it is our job as academics to expand upon it, to fill the structure with muscle and blood.

Argentina's political alliances are not made on the basis of left and right. To know Argentina is to understand the precarious and fragile nature of political power. To study the nation is to stare upon a conglomeration of heterogenous and conflicting ideas which somehow manage to meet and break on a day-by-day basis. Because of this, frameworks that seek to simplify her political reality do the nation and the academic world a disservice. Labels of left and right merely skim the swirling surface that is the ocean of political alliances Argentinians constantly navigate. These simple categorizations obscure the divide that comes first and foremost in any Argentinian political calculation, that of Peronism and anti-Peronism.

Populism forever changed the political culture of Argentina. With Perón's rise to power came the breakdown of Argentina's ideological spectrum. Investigating Argentina's Peronist movement alongside its anti-Peronist challengers point to the numerous ruptures and ideological "betrayals" both blocs have experienced. The continual evolution of Peronism, under the guise of different "-isms"—which always lead back to the Perón nucleus (real or imagined)—demonstrates its lack of ideological strength or commitment. The Peronist base is not ideologically bound but

rather precariously secured by an allusion to Perón; it is a frame reliant upon the constant division of

society. Peronism can essentially be stripped down to the ways in which the antithetical relationship

between "the people" and "the elite" (two empty, malleable signifiers) is communicated and

performed. "Us vs. them" defines the Argentinian political arena, and these labels can harbor

factions of both the left and right simultaneously.

Expanding upon Ostiguy's evaluative framework for understanding Argentinian political

identities, this work aimed to highlight the erratic and fluctuating nature of Peronist and anti-

Peronist coalitions. This lack of ideological saliency proves Aslandis' and Laclau's theorization of

populism. The latter is not a thin ideology or a political strategy but a frame. Populist discourse,

through this lens, can be perceived as the systematic dissemination of a frame that diagnoses reality

as problematic because "corrupt elites" have unjustly usurped the sovereign authority of the "noble

people" and maintains that the solution to the problem resides in the righteous political mobilization

of the latter in order to regain power.[237] Throughout Argentina's history leaders have utilized this

political tool to win elections. Peronism has been authoritarian and pro-democracy (though this is

highly debatable); it has swung across the entire left-right spectrum. Oftentimes, the JP is made up

of factions from both the extreme left and right. Although this might seem improbable and

dangerously paradoxical, Peronism has survived its internal fracturing. Peronist leaders have relied

on polarization and antithesis to mobilize their electorate. Since it is not bound by ideological

promises, populism can circumvent the LR divide and any political allegiances it chooses to make.

The same logic can be applied to anti-populist movements. The anti-Peronist coalition has

housed a heterogenous array of interests, leaders, and plans. It has been leftist, rightist and centrist.

Yet, it has always sought to protect democracy. It has positioned itself in stark opposition to

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[237] Paris Aslandis, "Is Populism an Ideology? A Refutation and a New Perspective," *Political Studies*, 64 (15), (2016). DOI: 10.1111/1467-9248.12224

Peronism and has additionally stood as a strong defender of the democratic system. Anti-Peronist is a frame too, yet one that is confined to its commitment to democracy. Peronism does not make the same promises.

Perhaps a touch of ideology would save the Argentinian political system. As seen in the 2015 elections, the Peronist/anti-Peronist divide aligned itself well with the left-right divide. In this specific instance, one could make predictions for the nation along lines demarcated by the LR dichotomy. This overlap did not hold, and soon enough politics continued to be marked by the Peronist/anti-Peronist question.

As Peronism continues to split, the Argentinian electorate will have to choose its future. Will vice-president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner resume her challenging and undermining of both the rule of law and the president she is meant to serve alongside? Will the anti-Peronists manage to garner enough support to put up a fight? No matter how strong, destructive and pervasive Peronist rhetoric may be, the Argentine are a resilient and adaptable people. They have weathered many storms, they will weather many more.

Appendix

Table 1: A delineation of Peronism's ideological changes (1943-1974)

Peronist wave	Sectors traditionally bound by right-wing ideology or self-proclaimed rightists	Sectors traditionally bound by left-wing ideology or self-proclaimed leftists
1943-1946	The Army, the Church. National industrialists as well as politically marginal civil and military right-wing and Social Christian intellectuals, small and medium industrial and commercial entrepreneurs, and the rural middle bourgeoisie.[238]	The urban and rural proletariat.[239]
1946-1955	The Army and Church (until around 1953). Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista (ALN)	Urban industrial workers.
1955-1974	Vandorista movement, the Rural Society, the Argentine Industrial Union, Comando de Organización	Montoneros, Juventud Peronist (JP or Peronist Youth), Ejército

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[238] Federico M. Rossi, "Peronism," *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements,* (2013). DOI: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbespm366; Juan Eugenio Corradi, "Argentina and Peronism: Fragments of the Puzzle," Latin American Perspectives, (1974). https://www.jstor.org/stable/2633117

[239] Federico M. Rossi, "Peronism," *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social and Political Movements,* (2013). DOI: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbespm366; Juan Eugenio Corradi, "Argentina and Peronism: Fragments of the Puzzle," Latin American Perspectives, (1974). https://www.jstor.org/stable/2633117

	(the "Organization Commando), La Guardia de Hierro (the Iron Guard).[240] Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario Tacuara (MNRT). La Alianza Anticomunista Argentina (Triple A).	Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP or The People's Revolutionary Army).[241] Alianza Libertadora Nacionalista (ALN).

Table 2: A delineation of anti-Peronism's ideological changes 1943-1974

Anti-Peronist wave	Sectors traditionally bound by right-wing ideology or self-proclaimed rightists	Sectors traditionally bound by left-wing ideology or self-proclaimed leftists
1943-1946	Conservative business sectors, conservative Argentine Industrial Union (Unión Industrial Argentina).[242]	Communists, Socialists, Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union), Argentina Libre, Orden Cristiano, Pro-Allied forces.[243]

[240] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[241] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[242] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf

[243] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf; Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9;

1946-1955	Conservatives, La Prensa.[244]	Communists, Socialists, Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union), Argentina Libre, Orden Cristiano.[245] The Church and the Navy (1955).
1955-1974	Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo (UCRP), Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente (UCRI), Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo (eventually turned Peronist).[246]	Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union), Movimiento Nacional y Popular, Unión Cívica.[247]

[244] Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9;

[245] Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf; Jorge A. Nállim, *Transformations and Crisis of Liberalism in Argentina, 1930-1955,* University of Pittsburgh Press. https://doi.org/j.ctt9qh51x.9;

[246] Miko Mandilovitch, "Group Conflict and Political Change in Argentina (1955-1966)," University of Michigan, (1976). https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/group-conflict-political-change-argentina-1955/docview/302767893/se-2?accountid=8361; Pierre Ostiguy, "Argentina's Double Political Spectrum: Party System, Political Identities and Strategies," *The Helen Kellogg Institute for International Studies*, (October 2009). https://kellogg.nd.edu/sites/default/files/old_files/documents/361_0.pdf;

[247] Peter G. Snow, "Argentine Radicalism: 1957-1963," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 5, no. 4 (1963): 507–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/165174.

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