



GA3: Special Political and Decolonization Committee

Student Officer: Elif Gün

Issue: Mitigating the political transition in Argentina

TIMUN '24 
Turkish International Model United Nations





Committee: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA3)
Issue: Mitigating the political transition in Argentina
Student Officer: Elif Gün – Deputy President

I. Introduction

Argentina is one of the most prominent countries in Latin America as it is Latin America's second-largest country by area and the region's third-largest economy. Over the years, the country has experienced many economic and political hardships due to the political transitions. The country's oscillations between populist and reformist governments have created serious economic instability and social distress. Argentina's political shifts from military dictatorship to a democratic system have not been functional due to the government's inability to handle economic crises and increasingly polarized political landscapes. Thus, the legacy of populism and military rule has left the country's political culture deeply divided. The constant failure of the governments from both the left and right sides had created social upheaval. Society has been living under overwhelming pressure with increasing poverty and an over 140% inflation rate. Recently, this led the society to elect the radical far-right president Javier Milei who proposes a different approach towards fixing the economy by integrating the US dollar into Argentina's currency. Additionally, social movements regarding human rights and anti-corruption have led the political discourse of the country.

II. Involved Countries and Organizations

China

China is Argentina's second-largest trading partner after Brazil. In the last couple of years, China's state-owned industries and companies have invested heavily in Argentina's agriculture, infrastructure, and telecommunications sectors. Between 2005 and 2019, China invested nearly 31 billion in Argentina, almost 40 percent of all Chinese investment in South America. (CFR) Thus, China is an important economic partner for Argentina and vital for them to improve their international trade.

Brazil

Brazil is Argentina's largest trading partner. Thus, any fluctuation or political instability affects Brazil's both internal and external economy drastically. It affects joint ventures, bilateral trade, and regional trade agreements. Peronists' support for Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro regime under President Fernandez has increased the tensions between Brazil and Venezuela which affects both sides' economies.



United States

During the 20th century, the United States was not pleased with Peronist views due to its neutrality during the Cold War and leftist policies that Mussolini inspired and they cut off aid. After the military coup, they became closer as their anti-communist views were similar and the US supported Argentina financially during the military junta. Thus, the conflict between the leftists and rightists affects the relationship with the US which is prominent for the country's economy.

Paraguay

Paraguay is an important country for Argentina's safety as there are serious criminal activities such as arms and drug trafficking and smuggling between the states. It is important to provide bilateral security between Argentina and Paraguay as it affects both the illegal markets of the country and its reputation at the international level.

III. Focused Overview of the Issue

1. History of Argentina

In order to understand how Argentina suffers from political shifts, the history of the country should be seen. During the colonial era, Latin America was mostly colonized by 2 Iberian countries: Portugal and Spain. Lands where the modern Argentine State exists were colonized by the Spanish Empire around the late 16th century. Due to its sparse indigenous population, the specific social structure of Argentina differed a lot from the other Latin American regions. The Spanish Empire established very exhaustive exploitative labor systems. For example, the local population was kept in debt and the economic opportunities in the region were limited while reaping massive profits through Repartimiento. The governing bodies during Argentina's colonial era were highly corrupted, which led to further local power struggles. These governing bodies were on paper, all under the rule of the Spanish rule. However, these bodies could be partially or totally traded, or these bodies



"Picture 1: Spanish Viceroyalties and Portuguese Territories of Latin America (Brittanica)"



could be divided into smaller sectors, that could've been sold. This system encouraged rulers to divide their territories and allocate rulers for their own gains. Those rulers who bought their rights were able to implement even harsher policies to maximize their gains, and they did so. This system also weakened each ruler, as there were more bodies in control, with different goals and aims, which resulted in power struggles.



"Picture 2: Argentine War of Independence (Wikipedia)"

In 1816, Argentina finally declared its independence from Spain after the Argentine War of Independence. Even during the state's inception, power oscillations were seen between the Federalist and Unitarian parties. These struggles led to a series of civil wars, destabilizing the region. The 1853 Constitution brought stability to the region, where a federal system with checks and balances was established. From 1875 to 1914, in a period known as Belle Époque, the state saw rapid economic growth, as a result of the stability

brought earlier to the region. During this period, prominent advancements in infrastructure, especially in education, transportation, and communication were made. These advancements laid the groundwork for Argentine modernization. By 1913, the state's prosperity reached a new peak, and Argentine income per capita was on par with Western Europe, highlighting its position as one of the wealthiest countries globally. Argentina saw the highest literacy rates in comparison to the rest of the world during this period. However, after World War I, the nation experienced a series of military coups that disrupted democratic processes. Cycles of dictatorship and democracy occurred during this period. 1943, Juan Peron became the leader of Argentina by organizing a coup. He governed the country with his populist political philosophy, known as Peronism. This ideology has affected the politics of Argentina till today.



Juan Peron was inspired by Mussolini's fascist Italy. He aimed to have an intrusive strong state and a strong emphasis on nationalism. He also combined that with having a very strong labor movement. He introduced economic isolation to the country after decades of international trade and economic growth of the country. The emphasis on national sovereignty led to the focus on workers by protecting them from foreign competition and it shut itself from international trade. Even though his policies might have been effective at the time of his governance, adopting his policies decades after his death is not a feasible way to improve the economic well-being of the Argentine State.



"Picture 3: Juan Peron"



"Picture 4: The streets of Argentina during the Coup-d'etat"

In 1976, a new military junta called the National Reorganization Process took control of the country and they aimed to purge the country from the leftist ideologies that Peron had introduced. Their campaign has become what is known as the "Dirty War". They killed and captured all political dissidents and anyone considered to be associated with Peronism. Many people supported their control due to economic reasons.



They thought that the military junta could improve the economy. However, during their control, the economy stagnated, inflation exploded and little economic development that had been achieved in the previous years was lost.

In 1983, Raul Ricardo Alfonsin was elected as the president of the country. It was a great example of democracy in the country after years of military junta control. He was the first non-peronist to win in a freely contested election in Argentine history. During his rule, the economy got so bad that the inflation increased tremendously that he had to resign. During this time, the external debt had reached a record of 63 billion. Due to this, Argentina once again returned to Peronism with Carlos Menon.

Carlos Menon embraced the new liberal economic policies that favored foreign capital, free trade, and privatization of state-owned industries. At first, his policies led to an initial period of economic stability and growth. He also managed to beat inflation by pegging the Argentine currency to the dollar. However, this economic stability has been reached in exchange for the impoverishment of millions as Argentine industries were driven out of business by foreign competition which led to massive unemployment. This led the society to elect a non-Peronist government again which was pledging to fix the economy from the neo-liberal policies of the prior government. However, he also failed to prevent the decline of economic productivity and poverty rates increased. By the end of 2001, the political and economic situation of Argentina was chaotic. The economic hardships led to the worst political crisis since the military junta. A succession of three presidents rotated into the presidency over 2 weeks. In the end, the country again turned into Peronism

Today, Argentine politics is still dominated by Peron's legacy. The political landscape is highly polarized, and the economic hardships fuel social movements advocating for human rights and anti-corruption measures. This situation reflects widespread discontent with either option for the governing body. Recently Javier Milei has been elected as a far-right president. He has proposed significant economic reforms. His administration faces challenges related to the polarized status quo. Although the current president opposes Peron's views, Peronists have been in power for the past 20 years, and one cannot rewind the 20 years' worth of work through an extremely different set of policies, without bringing about instability to the political and economic landscape.

2. The Main Political Parties in Argentina

Mostly, Argentina's politics were dominated by the Justicialist (Peronists) and Radical Civic Union (UCR) parties. The Justicialist Party supports economic intervention and welfare-state policies while the Radical Civic Union advocates for reducing the national debt, educational reform, and strengthening human rights, and is known for representing the interests of the urban middle class.



Additionally, there are less prominent parties including the Republican Proposal Party. It is a center-right party that supports free markets, tough punishment of crimes, and socially conservative policies. There is also the Libertarian Party which advocates for free markets and a dominant conservative stance on social issues such as abortion. Radical Libertarian Javier Milei has been elected as the president of Argentina in 2023.

3. Economic and Political Problems in Argentina

The country has been struggling with political polarization known as la grieta due to the unstable governance of Argentina. The extreme division between leftist and rightist political factions has led to the rapid reversals of government policy which fails in the efficient governance of the country.

Moreover, the country has suffered from corruption within the government, especially during Kirchnerism. It is a Peronist, further-left populist ideology that originated during the presidency of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. Even though there was economic growth during their presidency, there were serious allegations of fraud which resulted in the conviction of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. She was later banned for life from public service.



"Picture 5: Current president of Argentina"



These problems in political transition and a great result in economic crisis as the government fails to implement efficient policies. Inflation is one of the biggest problems in the country. Over the years, inflation has been constantly high and it was over 140% in 2023. This leads the civilians to keep their savings in dollars because their trust for local currency is expectedly really low. Due to this, there is a limitation of buying dollars that is imposed on citizens which entails black markets to emerge for US dollars. Thus, there is an informal currency market. Additionally, over one-third of the workers are employed by the government. This is one of the policies that is a remaining of the Peronism Legacy, which leads to tremendous spending on paying salaries instead of investing in infrastructure and technology. Governments' policies to prevent this have been inefficient and dysfunctional as they leaned on printing money. It exacerbated the situation with increasing inflation because putting more money in circulation cannot magically increase the value of the money, it decreases the value of it, if there is more of the currency, it is not worth as much. The government also borrows a lot of money and inefficiently utilizes those funds. To pay back the borrowed money, the government borrows more money. Due to this vicious cycle the Argentine government has been in, according to the International Monetary Fund, the national debt has exceeded 400 billion dollars which is more than 80% of the GDP of Argentina.

4. Current Situation

As previously stated, in 2023, far-right Libertarian Javier Milei was elected as the president of Argentina. He was elected as a reaction to the years of bad governance and increasing poverty caused by the far-left Peronist government. His radical opinions have laid a different perspective on the solution which was a prominent factor in his election. Although he pledged to introduce the US dollar as Argentina's official currency at the start of his presidency, he shelved plans to dollarize the economy and instead prioritized cutting spending and reducing the deficit. His presidency also threatens some human rights such as bans on abortion and limited access to healthcare for women. Even though the Argentine people want change, it is evident that both parties have various problems, and the oscillations between these parties as a reaction to the incompetency of both parties only result in more harm, more polarization, and more instability, as each time the ruling party changes, previous governments' efforts are thrown out of the window and a new approach is adopted. This inability to continue a set of amending policies highlights the adverse effect of unstable oscillations.

IV. Key Vocabulary

Peronism: Peronism is an Argentine political phenomenon born on 17 October 1945. Its name comes from an army colonel named Juan Perón, a key figure in the military dictatorship established in 1943. (Oxford)



Coup d'état: The sudden, forcible, and illegal removal of a government, usually by the military or some part thereof, often precipitated by more immediate grievances bearing directly on the military. (Oxford)

Military junta: Committee or administrative council, particularly one that rules a country after a coup d'état and before a legal government has been established. (Britannica)

Fascism: political ideology and mass movement that dominated many parts of central, southern, and eastern Europe between 1919 and 1945. Although fascist parties and movements differed significantly from one another, they had many characteristics in common, including extreme militaristic nationalism, contempt for electoral democracy, and political and cultural liberalism. (Britannica)

Populism: It refers to a range of political stances that emphasize the idea of “the people” and often juxtapose this group against “the elite”. It presents “the people” as a morally good force and contrasts them against “the elite”, who are portrayed as corrupt and self-serving. (ECPS)

Free market: An economic system based on supply and demand, in which companies manage their own business, prices, profits, etc. without being controlled by the government. (Cambridge)

Globalization: Globalization refers to the growing interconnection of nations' economies. It represents the flow of financial products, goods, technology, information, and jobs across national borders and cultures. In economic terms, it describes an interdependence of countries around the globe fostered through free trade. (Investopedia)

Democratic Consolidation: A democracy becomes consolidated when political actors accept the legitimacy of democracy and no actor seeks to act outside democratic institutions for both normative and self-interested reasons. (Oxford)

V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
6th of September 1930	The first military coup occurred
24th of February 1946	The election of Juan Peron
16th of September 1955	Overthrow of Peron
24th of March 1976	Military coup and the start of the dictatorship
10th of December 1983	Raul Alfonsin was elected as the president



8th of July 1989	Early resignation of Raul Alfonsin
December 1990	A failed coup attempt against Carlos Menem
25th of May 2003	Nestor Kirchner became president
10th of December 2015	Transition to Mauricio Macri
10th of December 2019	Return to Peronism with Alberto Fernandez
10th of December 2023	Javier Milei was elected as the president

VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

Although the UN did not pass any resolutions directly related to this issue in Argentina, they have passed resolutions that promote democratic principles and fair governance globally: **A/RES/55/96**, https://www.eods.eu/library/UNGA_Resolution%20Promoting%20Democracy_2001_en.pdf

There are also other treaties that Argentina signed:

- **The Inter-American Democratic Charter** is a charter that Argentina signed in 2001 to uphold democratic principles, strengthen human rights, and ensure political stability: https://www.oas.org/en/democratic-charter/pdf/demcharter_en.pdf
- **The United Nations Convention Against Corruption** is another treaty that Argentina signed to enhance transparency, ensure fair practicals, and strengthen public institutions: https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/UN_Convention_Against_Corruption.pdf

VII. Failed Solution Attempts

The country has tried to work with international organizations including the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) to fix the political instability and polarization by promoting fair elections, decreasing corruption and democratic governance. However, these attempts fail as the convicted president, Kirschners, has committed corruption within the government many times. Moreover, the governments tried to fix the economy by spending less. However, they tried to do this by reducing subsidies which pushed up inflation. They also tried to devalue the currency which also increased inflation.

All of the failed attempts at fixing political instability led to the bad governance of the country which affected the economy. As the economy exacerbates year by year, the trust for the government also decreases which entails new political factions to rise to the government. This results in the constant shift of the government and poorly managed transition in politics which affects every part of the governmental body.



VIII. Possible Solutions

Firstly, the Argentine government should earn back the trust of its citizens. Because without earning the trust of the citizens, they can not increase the trust of the markets. To fulfill the trust, they need to implement proper policies. Secondly, they should have economic safeguards. The implementation of both devaluing of currency and decreasing government spending increases inflation drastically. However, it is only a short-term problem for a long-term solution but constant political instability fails to maintain the long-term development. Thus, implementing economic safety nets and agreements to stabilize the economy and markets during election times. Thirdly, the government should prevent further political polarization by initiating political discussions to promote an open environment for policy collaboration. They can additionally participate more in the international environment by getting advice and observing neutral bodies to improve their transparency and mitigate a better transition.

IX. Useful Links

- <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/argentina>
- <https://gordoninstitute.fiu.edu/news-events/the-policy-spotlight/2024/argentina-political-and-economic-challenges.html>
- <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/ARG>



X. Works Cited

- “Argentina’s Struggle for Stability.” *Council on Foreign Relations*,
www.cfr.org/backgrounder/argentinas-struggle-stability#chapter-title-0-6. Accessed 11 Nov. 2024.
- Watson, Katy. “Radical Political Change in Argentina and an Uncertain Future.” *BBC News*, BBC, 20 Nov. 2023, www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-67470710. Accessed 11 Nov. 2024.
- “Towards a Democratic Civil Peace.” *Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)*, www.prio.org/publications/3324. Accessed 11 Nov. 2024.
- “Argentina’s Dirty War and the Transition to Democracy.” *Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*,
adst.org/2014/10/argentinas-dirty-war-and-the-transition-to-democracy/. Accessed 12 Nov. 2024.
- “Argentina: Rough Political Transition and Painful but Needed Reforms Are Expected as Far-Right Milei Is Elected President.” *Credendo*,
credendo.com/en/knowledge-hub/argentina-rough-political-transition-and-painful-needed-reforms-are-expected-far. Accessed 12 Nov. 2024.