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Historiography

Argentina's Twentieth Century Historiography

Traditional twentieth century historiography of Argentina plots the rise and fall of Latin America's once most promising republic: a nation that established universal male suffrage under a democratic institutional design in 1912 yet experienced fourteen military presidents between 1930 and 1983¹; a nation that boasted unparalleled growth rates between 1860 and 1930² yet by the 1980s became crippled by sky-rocketing inflation and in 2001 underwent the largest debt default in history.³

Over the last half-century, scholars have approached the topic of Argentina's paradoxical underperformance by focusing on either political or economic explanations. The nation's political underperformance since 1930 is attributed largely to a tradition of populist politics that

¹ Levitsky, Steven and María Victori Murillo (2005). *Argentine Democracy: The Politics of Institutional Weakness*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press. p. 3

² Díaz Alejandro, Carlos F (1970). *Essays on the Economic History of the Argentine Republic*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 2

³ Several works in English influenced my conceptualization of the twentieth century Argentine historiography, arranged here in chronological order. Whitaker, Arthur P (1961). "The Argentine Paradox." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*. 334: 103-112; Crawley, Eduardo (1984). *A House Divided: Argentina, 1880-1980*. London: C. Hurst & Company; Corradi, Juan E (1985). *The Fitful Republic: Economy, Society, and Politics in Argentina*. Boulder and London: Westview Press; Bergquist, Charles (1986). "Argentina." Chp. 3 in *Labor in Latin America: Comparative Essays on Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Waisman, Carlos H (1987). *Reversal of Development in Argentina: Postwar Counterrevolutionary Policies and Their Structural Consequences*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press; Lewis, Paul (1990). *The Crisis of Argentine Capitalism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. Peralta-Ramos, Monica (1992). *The Political Economy of Argentina: Power and Class Since 1930*. Boulder: Westview Press; Erro, Davide G (1993). *Resolving the Argentine Paradox: Politics and Development, 1966-1992*. Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers; Lewis, Colin (1993). "Cycles and Macroeconomic Policy since the 1930s." Chp. 8 in Colin M. Lewis and Nissa Torrents, eds. *Argentina in the Crisis Years (1983-1990), From Alfonsín to Menem*. London: Institute of Latin American Studies; Romero, Luis Alberto (2002). *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press; Romero, Luis Alberto (2004). "The Argentine Crisis: A Look at the Twentieth Century" in Flavia Fiorucci and Marcus Klein, eds. *The Argentine Crisis at the Turn of the Millenium: Causes, Consequences and Explanations*. Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers.

culminated with Juan Domingo Perón.⁴ Perón's mastery of the electorate and his contribution to the advancement of working-class citizens through industrial jobs and social benefits cemented a legacy of populism that remains established in contemporary Argentine politics.⁵ Explanations for the nation's economic decline are numerous. Dependency theorists focusing on Argentina's economic downturn after 1930 centered attention on international economic shocks and especially the role of the Great Depression in Argentina's early decline.⁶ Following the end of the Cold War and the triumph of capitalism in the 1980s and 1990s, an abundance of literature surfaced that related Argentina's economic failures to irresponsible state intervention in the market. Scholars considered Argentina's withdrawal from the global market and shift after 1930 to economic nationalism and Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) development strategies under the Keynesian model as grave miscalculations. Post-neoliberal scholars writing today suggest the opposite; draconian structural adjustment policies and a retreat of the state under neoliberal reform led not only to the pauperization of the Argentine middle class but to the collapse of the nation's economy in December 2001.⁷

⁴ While class-based language and populist messages were first inserted into political discourse soon after the establishment of universal male suffrage in 1912 and increasingly during the presidency of Hipólito Yrigoyen (1916-1922 and 1928-1930), the peak of populist politics in Argentina did not occur until Juan Domingo Perón's entrance into politics in 1943. For a review of early twentieth century Argentine populism see Karush, Matthew (2002). *Workers or Citizens: Democracy and Identity in Rosario, Argentina (1912-1930)*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press and Horowitz, Joel (2008). *Argentina's Radical Party and Popular Mobilization, 1916-1930*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

⁵ For a review on the legacy of Peronist populism see Epstein, Edward C (1975). "Politicization and Income Redistribution in Argentina: The Case of the Peronist Worker." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 23:4(615-631); Edward C. Epstein (1979). "Control and Co-optation of the Argentine Labor Movement." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 27: 3(445-465); Turner, Frederick C. and José Enrique Miguens, eds (1983). *Juan Perón and the Reshaping of Argentina*. Pittsburgh, PA: The University of Pittsburgh Press. Falcoff, Mark (1984). "Is Peronism Finished?" *Commentary*. 77:2 (60-65).

⁶ Influential books of this position and focused more broadly on the Latin American region during this period are Cockcroft, James D., Andre Gunder Frank, and Dale L. Johnson (1972). *Dependence and Underdevelopment: Latin America's Political Economy*. New York: Anchor Books and Cardoso, Fernando Henrique and Enzo Faletto (1979). *Dependency and Development in Latin America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

⁷ Examples of these works include Ramos, Joseph (1986). *Neoconservative Economics in the Southern Cone of Latin America, 1973-1983*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press; Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press. Waisman, Carlos H (1987). *Reversal of Development in Argentina: Postwar Counterrevolutionary Policies and Their Structural Consequences*; Naím, Moisés (1994). "Latin America: The

Detaching the political from the economic, however, is inappropriate for an accurate analysis of Argentina's development. Argentina's political and economic developments are interrelated and impossible to understand in isolation. Still, the two should not be mistaken for complimentary processes. Argentina's historiography is best understood as a tale of two incompatibilities. In examining the contribution of both political and economic liberalism to the Argentine narrative, it is important to recognize how each opposes and contradicts the other in large part because of the nation's powerful labor movement. Argentina's historiography continues to be transformed by cyclical changes in political and economic policy influenced by the nation's politically active working class.

The dialectical relationship between political and economic developments in Argentina's twentieth century historiography are discussed in this essay throughout four historical stages: the democratic opening, here limited to the years between 1912 and 1930; the Peronist period, including the lead-up years to Juan Perón's presidency; within the most recent transitions to neoliberalism and democracy in the late 1970s and early 1980s respectively; and finally, in post-neoliberal Argentina today. Only a brief discussion of sporadic periods of military control will be discussed. The military's role in the Argentine narrative is an immense subject, one that could overwhelm and possibly distract from the central focus of this essay.

Argentina's Democratic Opening

The commencement of Argentina's paradoxical underdevelopment is generally located in 1930 following the international economic shock of the Great Depression and the military overthrow of democratically elected President Hipólito Yrigoyen. Yet, in order to understand the

Second Stage of Reform." *Journal of Democracy*. 5:4; Smith, William C (1991). "State, Market, and Neoliberalism in Post-Transition Argentina: The Menem Experiment" in *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs* 33:4; Lewis, Paul (2009). *The Agony of Argentine Capitalism*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

nation's subsequent economic and political failures it is first necessary to investigate the breakdown of Argentina's introductory experiment with democracy. This section examines scholarship on the political and economic context of Argentina during the years of its democratic opening (1912-1930).

Beyond the celebrated growth of Argentina's economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the period is also associated with what Eduardo Crawley describes as the "rise of the little men."⁸ Sustained economic expansion and development at the turn of the century led to an influx of immigrant laborers and consequently, to a sizable population of foreign-born immigrants. By the time of Argentina's third census in 1914, immigrants and those descended from immigrants since 1850 comprised 80 percent of the nation's population.⁹ In order to manage these social and demographic changes, Argentine legislators passed the Sáenz Peña Law in 1912, which guaranteed universal, secret and obligatory male suffrage. This expansion of the electorate, in short time, opened the political system to a new generation of aspiring citizens and altered traditional political practices. Argentina's early experiment with democracy likewise generated new economic challenges.

David Rock, the dean of early twentieth century Argentine politics, explains this democratic opening as an institutional design limited in participatory scope. His scholarship on political activity during the 1912-1930 period functions as a critique of the conventional understanding of Argentina's democratic foundation as both stable and representative.¹⁰ Rather

⁸ "Rise of the little men" is a chapter title for the period of 1895 to 1916 in Argentina within Eduardo Crawley's *A House Divided* (1984). London: C. Hurst & Company.

⁹ Rock, David (1985). *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 166.

¹⁰ A selection of Rock's works on early twentieth century Argentine politics include, Rock, David (1972). "Machine Politics in Buenos Aires and the Argentine Radical Party, 1912-1930." *Journal of Latin American Studies*. 4:2 (233-256); Rock, David (1975). *Politics in Argentina: 1890-1930: The Rise and Fall of Radicalism*. London: Cambridge University Press; Rock, David (1975). "Radical Populism and the Conservative Elite: 1912-1930" in *Argentina in*

than an attempt to incorporate Argentina's new laborers into a national project, Rock sees this early political experiment as merely a way to mollify middle class frustrations while also preserving the political power of business and landed elites. To carry out this political project, both the Radical and Conservative parties relied on a well-developed system of patronage and what Rock terms "machine politics" as electoral strategies for winning over political constituents.¹¹ In effect, "[...] the true intent of the Sáenz Peña Law," Rock concludes, "was less to foster change but to restrain it by co-opting native groups, including the new middle classes, into formal politics as a buffer against the immigrants and the workers."¹² Rock explains Argentina's democracy as an elite solution to maintain control and direction of the country in light of their new minority status.

Richard J. Walter's research confirms Rock's analysis that social class largely determined political preference in the first democratic elections and that patronage remained a prevalent practice even after the transition to democracy. However, Walter also suggests evidence of an attempt by the Radical Party to expand its base of support to the working classes. Although Walter provides a weak analysis of working class political identity during the democratic opening, he approaches the subject of working class voters that had been neglected by previous scholarship before him, including that of Rock.¹³

the Twentieth Century, ed. by David Rock. Pittsburgh: University of Pennsylvania Press; Rock, David (1985). *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹¹ Rock describes the "machine character" of politics as "the specific techniques for the political support which is based upon the distribution to individuals of concrete rewards, such as bureaucratic offices, charity donations and petty personal privileges." See Rock, David (1972). "Machine Politics in Buenos Aires and the Argentine Radical Party, 1912-1930." *Journal of Latin American Studies*. 4:2 (233-256). p. 233.

¹² Rock, David (1985). *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 202.

¹³ For a review of class-party linkages in the city of Buenos Aires see Walter, Richard J (1978). "Elections in the City of Buenos Aires during the First Yrigoyen Administration: Social Class and Political Preferences." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*; Walter, David (1984). "Politics, Parties, and Elections in Argentina's Province of Buenos Aires, 1912-1942." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*. 64:4 (707-735) for a related work focused on the Province of Buenos Aires.

More recent literature extends Walter's incomplete analysis. Matthew B. Karush and Joel Horowitz revisit the issue of working class political participation in early twentieth century Argentina and dispute Rock's research that focuses only on patronage and social class determinants for political party success during the democratic opening.¹⁴ Both Karush and Horowitz work within a new historiography that stresses a key political role for workers. Horowitz specifically reexamines the Radical Party's novel political strategy of obrerismo as well as its inclusive appeal among urban popular classes, which included a significant number of native-born workers by 1916.¹⁵

The recent inclusion of the labor component within studies of Argentina's early experiment with democracy provides an additional clue to the curious discontinuation of democracy by conservative elites and the military by 1930. Yrigoyen's ejection from politics now appears provoked less from political incapacity to manage economic challenges brought on by the Great Depression and more related to his increasing ties with Argentina's working class. Carlos Díaz Alejandro's important work, *Essays on the Economic History of the Argentine Republic* provides further evidence. His research on Argentina's economic context immediately before the 1930 military overthrow of Yrigoyen reveals increasing strain between conservative

¹⁴ Matthew B Karush's *Workers or Citizens: Democracy and Identity in Rosario, Argentina (1912-1930)*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press (2002) offers an extensive analysis of worker political identity and related political party discourse in Rosario, Argentina throughout the democratic opening. For a new historical perspective on working-class participation and Radical Party linkages during the 1916-1930 period see Horowitz, Joel (1999). "Bosses and Clients: Municipal Employment in the Buenos Aires of the Radicals, 1916-1930." *Journal of Latin American Studies*. 31:3 (617-644) and Horowitz, Joel (2008). *Argentina's Radical Party and Popular Mobilization, 1916-1930*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

¹⁵ Yrigoyen's charismatic personality helped garner a great following among the urban popular classes. Horowitz notes in particular the image Yrigoyen created of himself as "the father of the workers" and "the most noble protector of the working-class." Such rhetorical images were made concrete by Yrigoyen's personal connections with the people and especially with the introduction of obrerismo. The Radical Party's concept of obrerismo implied a degree of guardianship of workers on behalf of Yrigoyen and the Radical Party. See Horowitz, Joel (2008). *Argentina's Radical Party and Popular Mobilization, 1916-1930*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

landed elites and the evolving Argentine populace.¹⁶ While Díaz Alejandro precedes by thirty years contemporary scholarship that incorporates the subject of labor into Argentina's democratic opening, he notes the emergence of an inconvenient challenge for the prosperous nation: economic efficiency and export production no longer matched popular government policy once the political system opened. Díaz Alejandro sees this incompatibility between the political and economic ultimately lead to a disruption in the democratic project: "Traditional elements grabbed back the political power so gracefully relinquished in 1916 and proceeded to grope for a new order that could substitute for the now-discredited liberal system."¹⁷ A solution to Argentina's new political and economic dilemma would not surface until nearly two decades later with Perón's rise to power.

Argentina's Peronist Reconstruction

Perón's political career and his reshaping of the Argentine nation are perhaps the most studied and most contentious issues in Argentine history. While scholars disagree regarding the effectiveness of Perón's political and economic strategies, it is widely accepted that he left a lasting impact on Argentine social thought. This section provides a condensed review of

¹⁶ One of the greatest disputes between landed elites and the Argentine populace at this time involved rural unrest over land rents. Despite Argentina's abundance of fertile land, most of the nation's underdeveloped territory was of lower economic quality than the land closer to metropolitan Buenos Aires. The lack of fertile, developed land, along with increased global demand for rural products, increased land rents and land value in Argentina. Moreover, only a small landed elite controlled these fertile lands. As a result, an outbreak of rural unrest occurred between 1912-1930. Landless workers protested due to a combination of increased land rents, crop failures/depressions in world market prices, and outrage over the Yrigoyen administration's reluctance to enact the Ley de Hogar, which would have allowed for public land grants to farmers. Although Yrigoyen implemented some moderate agrarian reform, landless workers generally disapproved of his politics. Argentina's landed elite also fiercely opposed Yrigoyen and any attempt at agrarian reform. These disputes are explored by both Carl Solberg and Díaz Alejandro. See Solberg, Carl (1971). "Rural Unrest and Agrarian Policy in Argentina, 1912-1930." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 13:1 (18-52); Díaz Alejandro, Carlos F (1970). *Essays on the Economic History of the Argentine Republic*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 35-40; 65-55.

¹⁷ Díaz Alejandro, Carlos F (1970). *Essays on the Economic History of the Argentine Republic*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. p. 66.

literature on the Peronist reconstruction of the nation and its impact on Argentina's political and economic development.

Modernization prompted the inevitability of two changes in Argentina by the late 1930s and early 1940s: first, a shift toward economic diversification through the expansion of Import Substitution Industrialization strategies and second, incorporation of the nation's burgeoning native-born working class.¹⁸ Argentina's launching of domestic industrialization first began under Conservative direction during the 1930-1945 period.¹⁹ However, genuinely transitioning away from Argentina's deeply embedded agriculture-based export economy and integrating workers into a unified national project only received serious consideration after Perón entered politics in 1943. To tackle these tasks, Perón embarked on a campaign of nationalism.²⁰

One of the major contributions on twentieth century Argentine nationalism appeared in 1967 with the publication of Samuel Bailey's *Labor, Nationalism, and Politics in Argentina*, in which he describes Perón's incorporation of workers into the national identity.²¹ Workers' interests converted into the nation's interest under Perón; for the first time, workers became

¹⁸ The economic plan to diversify Argentina's economy developed in response to economic strains produced by higher-priced imports and lulls in exports following World War I and the Great Depression. Political officials under both the Conservative governments of 1930-1945 and the Perón administration regarded economic independence as a modern economic strategy. See Alexander, Robert (1962). "Industrialization and Its Impact." Chp. 1 in *Labor Relations in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc; Alexander, Robert J (1979). *Juan Domingo Perón: A History*. Boulder: Westview Press; Díaz Alejandro, Carlos F (1970). "Stages in the Industrialization of Argentina." Chp. 4 in *Essays on the Economic History of the Argentine Republic*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

¹⁹ While Argentina's industrial development is often associated with Perón, economic research suggests otherwise. See Merckx, Gilbert W (1969). "Sectoral Clashes and Political Change: The Argentine Experience." *Latin American Research Review*. 4:3 (89-114) and Díaz Alejandro, Carlos F (1970). "Stages in the Industrialization of Argentina." Chp. 4 in *Essays on the Economic History of the Argentine Republic*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

²⁰ Early scholarship on Perón's nationalist project largely focuses on the Nazi tendencies within Perón's discourse. Written in the 1950s, this literature abandons analysis of Perón's political and economic policies and instead focuses on similarities between Argentina and Nazi Germany. While useful for a broader historical analysis, this body of literature is not reviewed in this historiography because of its deficiency on the themes pertinent to this essay. For a review of 1950s scholarship on Argentine nationalism see Cowles, Fleur (1952). *Bloody Precedent*. New York: Random House. Blanksten, George I (1953). *Perón's Argentina*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Owen, Frank (1957). *Perón: His Rise and Fall*. London: The Cresset Press.

²¹ Bailey, Samuel (1967). *Labor, Nationalism and Politics in Argentina*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

involved in framing the social question of this period, or what Bailey sees as the “much larger question of what kind of society they should live in and who should control it.”²² This modern development, explained as “popular nationalism” by Bailey, included a campaign for national economic independence and national political solidarity.²³ Writing just after the military coup that overthrew Perón in 1955, we learn from Bailey that Perón’s nationalist project ultimately failed because of its vague and often incompatible goals. “Popular nationalism” articulated a radical transformation of Argentine society that paradoxically divided the nation; shifting focus away from traditional sectors in order to promote the political, economic, and psychological advancement of workers permanently polarized Argentine politics. Following Perón, Bailey understands the nation’s political stability as forever dependent upon upper and middle class acceptance of workers as an integral part of the national identity.²⁴

Gilbert W. Merkx’s excellent analysis of Perón’s economic policies joins Bailey in suggesting the permanent Peronist impact on Argentina’s development, though Merkx understands Argentina’s persistent instability in terms of economic conflict. Merkx chiefly focuses on sectoral divisions within Perón’s economic reconstruction project and explains how increased industrial investment and the near total neglect of agriculture, though politically logical in the short term, proved economically disastrous for Perón and for Argentina in the long run. As a result, following Perón’s removal from office in 1955, officials increased agriculture investments and slowed industrialization in order to stabilize the economy. Writing in 1969, Merkx predicts a continuous reversal of policy in Argentina’s future as Peronist leaders come in and out of power: “This contest for income resembles a game of leap-frog: first one income

²² Bailey, Samuel (1967). *Labor, Nationalism and Politics in Argentina*. p. 4

²³ Bailey refers to “popular nationalism” as “the force generated by the ‘mobilized’ workers seeking to establish a new identity and to protect their interests.” See Bailey, Samuel (1967). *Labor, Nationalism and Politics in Argentina*. p. 5.

²⁴ Bailey, Samuel (1967). *Labor, Nationalism and Politics in Argentina*. p. 192.

group is ahead, then another. Agriculture entrepreneurs were losers under Perón, but since his fall they have gained. Industrial workers gained under Perón and lost ground afterwards.”²⁵ The economic therefore becomes political as individuals within each sector seek continuous influence and power. Argentina’s political stability after Perón, according to Merx, is determined by more than equal recognition of workers as Bailey earlier suggested; Argentine political stability requires a new political alliance between workers and landowners.²⁶

In the 1970s, following Perón’s death, scholars began to discuss Argentina’s future development in terms of the Peronist legacy.²⁷ Two examples are Edward C. Epstein and Robert J. Alexander. Writing within a context of growing labor unrest, Epstein’s evaluation of Argentine politics attributes Perón’s long-lasting popularity to his singular willingness to address workers’ grievances.²⁸ Epstein connects Peronist longevity to economic gains achieved by workers and understands protests following Perón’s departure from politics in terms of deprivation theory. Alexander’s *Juan Domingo Perón: A History* more pessimistically describes Perón’s legacy as leaving behind a deeply divided and weak state. In sum, “a country with less influence than it had at any time before in the twentieth century.” While workers attained higher wages and a preferred station during Perón’s time in office, his state-centered project jeopardized the nation’s democratic and economic stability. As Alexander deduces, “Perón went too far.”²⁹

²⁵ Merx, Gilbert W (1969). “Sectoral Clashes and Political Change: The Argentine Experience.” *Latin American Research Review*. 4:3 (89-114). p. 108

²⁶ Some scholars disagree with this interpretation. See Lewis, Paul (1990). *The Crisis of Argentine Capitalism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. p. 7

²⁷ Examples of this scholarship include Epstein, Edward C (1975). “Politicization and Income Redistribution in Argentina: The Case of the Peronist Worker.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 23:4 (615-631); Rock, David (1975). “The Survival and Restoration of Peronism.” Chp. 8 in *Argentina in the Twentieth Century*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press; Alexander, Robert J (1979). *Juan Domingo Perón: A History*. Boulder: Westview Press.

²⁸ Epstein, Edward C (1975). “Politicization and Income Redistribution in Argentina: The Case of the Peronist Worker.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 23:4 (615-631).

²⁹ Alexander, Robert J (1979). *Juan Domingo Perón: A History*. Boulder: Westview Press. p. 146.

By the late 1970s and into the 1980s, in an attempt to reconcile Argentina's steady underperformance with Perón's earlier social and economic achievements for workers, scholars began to reassess assumptions concerning Perón's "paternalism" and "co-optation" of the labor movement through economic benefits.³⁰ They questioned if organized labor had been "duped by a clever politician" or if, in fact, workers served as "active agent[s] in the making of Peronism."³¹ Epstein's study in 1979 develops his earlier research by addressing Perón's model of Argentine corporatism. He concludes that Perón could not simply co-opt workers with higher wages; in order to gain the political loyalty of a powerful and extremely autonomous labor movement, Perón also had to reconstruct a genuine ideology of worker dignity in Argentina.³² Perón benefited greatly from his connection to labor, but so also did workers gain from state support. Daniel James writes within this period and reexamines in *Resistance and Integration* the common characterization of Perón as undemocratic.³³ James recasts Perón as a true advocate for democracy; Perón, according to James, redefined Argentina's limited democratic system to

³⁰ A selected list of these readings include on the loss of organized labor's autonomy include: Lewis, Paul H (1975). "Labor." Chp. 9 in *The Governments of Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company; Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier (1979). "Inducements versus Constraints: Disaggregating 'Corporatism.'" *The American Political Science Review*. 73:4 (967-986); Epstein, Edward C (1979). "Control and Co-optation of the Argentine Labor Movement." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 27:3 (445-465). Ranis, Peter (1979). "Early Peronism and The Post-Liberal Argentine State." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*. 21:3 (313-338).

³¹ Munck, Ronaldo, R. Falcon and B. Galitelli (1987). *Argentina: From Anarchism to Peronism. Workers, Unions and Politics, 1855-1985*. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd. p. 122, 127. See also James, Daniel (1988). *Resistance and Integration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³² Epstein bases the success of Perón's corporatist project on the following four conditions: 1) strong political support; 2) willingness to use repression; 3) a discourse in which workers are depicted as an integral part of the nation; and 4) use of inducements, or material benefits. Collier and Collier analyze the various meanings of "corporatism" in Latin America. They distinguish between differing levels of "inducements" and "constraints," or simply, differing levels of benefits and threats from the state. They conclude that Perón's corporatist project is characterized by more inducements than constraints because he faced an autonomous and powerful labor movement, which lent him political support. See Collier, Ruth Berins and David Collier (1979). "Inducements versus Constraints: Disaggregating 'Corporatism.'" *The American Political Science Review*. 73:4 (967-986). Epstein, Edward C (1979). "Control and Co-optation of the Argentine Labor Movement." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 27:3 (445-465).

³³ James, Daniel (1988). *Resistance and Integration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 38

include social and economic rights. Perón's relationship with workers is refashioned as a "two-way process of interaction."

Argentina: From Anarchism to Peronism. Workers, Unions and Politics, 1855-1985 by Eduardo Munck, et al is yet another example of scholarship that reexamines the history of organized labor in Argentina and find workers extremely independent even throughout Perón's time in office. Instead of an easily co-opted political body, Munck, et al understand the working class as an "active agent in the making of Peronism."³⁴ The working class allied with Perón to defend its own interest, not the political interest of Perón. This stands in stark contrast to earlier literature, including that of Alexander, which explains Peronism as a top-down, one-way system. Munck illustrates his argument by providing strike statistics throughout the 1940s that indicate an upsurge of organized labor protests despite denouncements from Perón. Ultimately, however, the autonomy and strength of Argentina's labor movement leads to their demise; Munck's concluding depiction of the 1976 coup and military dictatorship thereafter reveals that, following Perón, only state repression can succeed over Argentina's labor movement.

Argentina's Liberal Transition

Capitalism surfaced as the prevailing paradigm in scholarship during the 1980s. After a near half-century experiment with state-centered, interventionist economic strategies, capitalism emerged in Argentina as the only rational option and common sense solution for stability. Rather than further examining political conflict, especially between elite landowners and industrial workers, studies predominantly shifted to a globally influenced economic analysis of Argentina's underdevelopment. This section will review the abundance of literature during this period

³⁴ Munck, Ronaldo, R. Falcon and B. Galitelli (1987). Argentina: From Anarchism to Peronism. Workers, Unions and Politics, 1855-1985. London, UK: Zed Books Ltd. p. 127

regarding Argentina's dual transition to democracy and neoliberalism and the impact each had on Argentina's long-term political and economic stability.

By the early 1980s, Argentina clearly suffered from deep political and economic disarray. It is within this era that the nation began its grueling transition away from economic nationalism and populist politics and toward a globally inspired democratic and economic liberalism project.³⁵ Yet, aware of Argentina's tendency for breakdowns and military coups, scholars remained uncertain about the possibility for a parallel economic and political project. In *The Fitful Republic: Economy, Society, and Politics in Argentina* Juan E. Corradi, an Argentine expatriate, attempts to understand the complexity of Argentina's persistent underperformance within the capitalist framework of his time.³⁶ Writing within the final years of an era guided by dependency theory, Corradi retells the history of Argentina by presenting the role of dependent capitalism in Argentina's cycle of chaos. Corradi's analysis leads to a sobering conclusion: Argentina's economic modernization is, finally, antithetical to democracy; Argentina's various social groups - each equally powerful - are affected differently by capitalist economic development and so a unified, national political project inevitably encounters division. As such, Corradi closes with hesitancy regarding the success of Argentina's 1983 transition to democracy.

David Rock's *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* and Paul Lewis' *The Crisis of Argentine Capitalism* similarly suggest doubt about a new Argentine future, although of two different persuasions.³⁷ While Lewis doubts Argentina's ability to undertake a

³⁵ While neoliberalism would not be embraced fully until President Carlos Menem's presidency, the military government's economic plan from 1976-1983 also included some neoliberal stabilization policies. See Ramos, Joseph (1986). *Neoconservative Economics in the Southern Cone of Latin America, 1973-1983*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press; Drake, Paul W (1996). *Labor Movements and Dictatorships: The Southern Cone in Comparative Perspective*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

³⁶ Corradi, Juan E (1985). *The Fitful Republic: Economy, Society, and Politics in Argentina*. Boulder: Westview Press.

³⁷ Lewis, Paul (1990). *The Crisis of Argentine Capitalism*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

true capitalist project that could repair the nation's consistent economic troubles, Rock remains unsure of Argentina's long-term prospects for democracy, described as having an "air of parenthesis rather than permanence," due to the nation's aversion to necessary economic change.³⁸

Yet, by the 1990s and end of the Cold War, confidence in the capitalist model replaced all previous uncertainty. Argentina's neoliberal experiment appeared to be working. Inflation rates dropped; foreign investments soared; President Carlos Menem suddenly became revered abroad for the "Argentine miracle" of recovery. David G. Erro, so confident in Argentina's transition by 1993, makes the case in *Resolving the Argentine Paradox: Politics and Development, 1966-1992* that Argentina's underdevelopment paradox had been resolved.³⁹ Erro reviews the corporatist systems of government beginning with Onganía in 1966 and continuing through Alfonsín in 1989 and concludes that each lacked "rational" policy-making practices.⁴⁰ Each also maintained a welfare state that inhibited market growth, thereby discouraging badly needed foreign investment. The breakdown of Argentine corporatism and genuine transformation, or weakening, of the state under President Carlos Menem signaled a radical new beginning for Argentina, marked by rational policy and market-oriented reform. "The Argentine Paradox," Erro writes, "has been resolved for the foreseeable future and shows no sign of returning."⁴¹

Peter Ranis, though writing from a sociological perspective, uses worker consciousness to highlight the positive impact of capitalism on Argentina's development. Neoliberalism altered

³⁸ Rock, David (1985). *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

³⁹ Erro, Davide G (1993). *Resolving the Argentine Paradox: Politics and Development, 1966-1992*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

⁴⁰ Erro, Davide G (1993). *Resolving the Argentine Paradox: Politics and Development, 1966-1992*. p. 157

⁴¹ Erro, Davide G (1993). *Resolving the Argentine Paradox: Politics and Development, 1966-1992*. p. 225

Argentina so much that worker demands became reduced to the economy by the 1990s. He issues a bold claim in *Argentine Workers: Peronism and Contemporary Class Consciousness*: Argentine workers in the 1990s inherently identify with a capitalist system. Workers seek the same demands as most other citizens: education, healthcare, decent wages, and safe working conditions. As such, workers support privatization and foreign investment in order to bring stability back to Argentina. “Though this would lead one to believe that the working class has been absorbed into a capitalist hegemonic project,” Ranis explains, “the workers themselves feel [...] that if capital grows, so do their life chances as individuals.”⁴²

Argentina’s Post-Neoliberal Revision

The collapse of Argentina’s economy in 2001 following two decades of structural adjustment reforms and free market strategies designed to fight hyper-inflation broke down the neoliberal ideological hegemony both in Argentine political circles and in scholarship. Perplexed by the “crisis in capitalism,” scholars searched for novel explanations to Argentina’s economic failure. Some, like Paul Lewis, again assigned fault to the legacy of Peronism.⁴³ Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo attributed the breakdown to weak state institutions.⁴⁴ And still, many others remained confounded by Argentina’s persistent underperformance, without any conjecture on consistent lapses or any prediction for the nation’s future development.⁴⁵ This section will review these and other works written within Argentina’s post-neoliberal framework.

⁴² Ranis, Peter (1992). *Argentine Workers: Peronism and Contemporary Class Consciousness*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

⁴³ Lewis, Paul (2009). *The Agony of Argentine Capitalism: From Menem to the Kirchners*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, LLC.

⁴⁴ Levitsky, Steven and María Victoria Murillo (2005). *Argentine Democracy: The Politics of Institutional Weakness*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

⁴⁵ Examples of this literature include Romero, Luis Alberto (2002). *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*; Romero, Luis Alberto (2004). “The Argentine Crisis: A Look at the Twentieth Century” in Flavia Fiorucci

By the end of Menem's presidency in 1999 Argentina's economy bordered on collapse. Lack of confidence in Argentine markets led to massive capital flight, estimated at \$14 billion dollars by the end of 2001. In an effort to stop the flight of Argentine pesos, President De la Ruá and economics minister Domingo Cavallo instituted a freeze on bank accounts, allowing only \$250 bank withdrawals per week. Argentines, outraged by the corralito, flooded the streets of Buenos Aires in protest and demanded De la Ruá's resignation. One month later, Argentina underwent the largest debt default in history.⁴⁶

Writing only a month after Argentina's political and economic collapse, Luis Alberto Romero reviews the last five years of Menem's administration, the dilemmas faced by President De la Ruá before his resignation in 2001, and the prospects for Argentina's future. Disillusioned by his country's neoliberal experiment and de-legitimized political class, Romero dishearteningly concludes in *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*: "Today, January 20, 2002, there are many possible outcomes to the present situation. None of them are good."⁴⁷

Cynical about Argentina's underdevelopment following two decades of austerity policies informed by the Washington Consensus⁴⁸ yet still hopeful for a new future, Gramscian-inspired writers began discussing counter-hegemonic strategies and movements in post-neoliberal Argentina.⁴⁹ Ulrich Brand and Nicola Sekler note the development of counter-hegemonic social

and Marcus Klein, eds. *The Argentine Crisis at the Turn of the Millennium: Causes, Consequences and Explanations*; MacLachlan, Colin M (2006). *Argentina: What Went Wrong?* Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

⁴⁶ Lewis, Paul (2009). *The Agony of Argentine Capitalism: From Menem to the Kirchners*.

⁴⁷ Romero, Luis Alberto (2002). *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*. p. 349.

⁴⁸ The Washington Consensus, aimed to tackle Latin America's debt crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, represents an understanding between policy makers in Washington, DC and those in certain developing countries regarding the promotion of free trade, foreign direct investment and deregulation policies. See Williamson, John (1990). "What Washington Means by Policy Reform." Chp. 2 *Latin American Adjustment: How Much Has Happened?* Washington DC: Institute for International Economics.

⁴⁹ Counter-hegemonic meaning construction relies in part on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, or the understanding that culture is sustained by influential ideas often viewed as "common sense." The awareness and acknowledgement of this psychological domination and how it shapes everyday life leads individuals to collectively create an alternative hegemony of ideas or identities that give power and recognition to the group. See Hoare, Quintin and

movements and the attempt by civil society to reconstruct a different Argentina through alternative forms of political organization.⁵⁰ In specifically examining both the piquetero movement and Argentina's Worker-Controlled Factories movement, the authors explain how democratic spaces emerged at the local level, which challenged the neoliberal model of governance. William Todd Evans and Karen Faulk also contribute to this scholarship by explaining counter-hegemonic processes at the worker-controlled Bauen Hotel in Buenos Aires.⁵¹ Both highlight worker cooperativism and business production as counter-hegemonic efforts in Argentina.

With time, scholarship returned to the traditional narrative of Argentina as a nation with a remarkable proclivity for populist politics. Paul Lewis' *The Agony of Argentine Capitalism: From Menem to the Kirchners* again traced Argentina's underdevelopment to the Peronist preoccupation with political opportunism over sensible economic reform. "[...] Concerns about survival in the short term trump considerations of economic rationality" Lewis summarizes, "Peronists, especially, are bored by economic arguments."⁵² Neil Richardson, writing in 2009, likewise makes the claim that populism remains an important concept for understanding Argentina's political and economic trajectory; populism is not simply a relic of the past. Populism has reemerged in Argentina, supported by the export-oriented politics of the Kirchners. The recent expansion of soybean exports now provides the Kirchners with a new commodity tax

Geoffrey Nowell Smith (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. New York: International Publishers.

⁵⁰ Brand, Ulrich and Nicola Sekler. "Struggling between Autonomy and Institutional Transformations: Social Movements in Latin America and the Move toward Post-Neoliberalism." Chp. 3 in Laura Macdonald and Arne Ruckert, eds., *Post-Neoliberalism in the Americas*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁵¹ See Evans, William Todd (2005). "Counter-Hegemony at Work: Resistance, Contradiction and Emergent Culture Inside a Worker-Occupied Hotel." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*. <<http://www.estebanmagnani.com.ar/wp-content/05%20counter-hegemony.pdf>> Accessed November 17, 2009 and Faulk, Karen Ann (2008). "If They Touch One of Us, They Touch All of Us: Cooperativism as a Counterlogic to Neoliberal Capitalism." *Anthropological Quarterly*. Summer (81:3).

⁵² Lewis, Paul (2009). *The Agony of Argentine Capitalism: From Menem to the Kirchners*. p. 192

with which to restart an “export-oriented populism” project. Because soybeans are not consumed by Argentines, the government can simultaneously promote and tax soybean exports, which can then be used to financially support populist programs. “Populism is not history,” Richardson insists.⁵³

Conclusion

Over the last half-century, the historiography of Argentina has continuously been transformed by conflicting political and economic projects that today pit Argentine citizens against the state. As Alejandro Grimson and Gabriel Kessler summarize in *On Argentina and the Southern Cone: Neoliberalism and National Imaginations*,

“In this context two metaphors firmly rooted in Argentine social imagery reappear in the form of two complementary disjunctions. One is between the Argentines of yesteryear who built the country and the present-day Argentines who let it fall to ruin. The second is the idea of Argentina versus the Argentines, expressed by two crossed oppositions. One is the tension between the state (Argentina) and society (Argentines), resulting from people’s increasing hostility toward the former’s ineptitude and degradation. Another is the tension existing between individuals (Argentines) and community (Argentina); in this view individual interests seeking egotistically to maximize benefits hurt the nation. Thus, in the same metaphor the nation is victim both of the Argentine state and of the Argentines that make it up.”⁵⁴

Political and economic progress significantly impacts the social bond of a nation and its people. Argentina’s history over the last century has repeated itself and in doing so, constantly reminded citizens of the state’s failure to develop to its potential. Representing such failures within Argentina’s modern historiography requires an analysis that both understands the interrelated

⁵³ Richardson, Neil P (2009). “Export-Oriented Populism: Commodities and Coalitions in Argentina.” *St Comparative International Development*. 44:(228-255)

⁵⁴ Grimson, Alejandro and Gabriel Kessler (2005). *On Argentina and the Southern Cone: Neoliberalism and National Imaginations*. New York: Routledge. p. 66.

nature of politics and economics yet also recognizes their fundamental incompatibility in the Argentine context.

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