

The Macri Administration: Elected Bureaucratic Authoritarianism? Peronism: democratisation or more of the same?

Guillermo Makin

Working as from two types of state devised by Guillermo O'Donnell, the Bureaucratic Authoritarian state (BA) and the form of Delegative Democracy he referred to as Plebiscitarian Presidentialism, it is possible to detect the administration's criteria for selecting personnel to man cabinet posts and main state agencies, wider policy preferences in areas such internal politics, law and order, trade unions, the economy, borrowing, imports, management of internal demand, industrial policy and foreign policy. The idea is that this comparative exploration, despite limitations that frequently arise when drilling down to specifics, will help us understand likely future policies of the administration. On the side of the opposition the presentation will examine state of the two main parties, Peronism and Radicalism (UCR) and the coalition they manage given the coming primaries in August 2019 and presidential and congressional elections in October 2019.

"Is Macri a Plebiscitarian Presidente? The Return of the Right in Latin America and the Quality of Democracy"

Gabriela Ippolito-O'Donnell

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Since the transition to democracy in the 1980s, most countries of Latin America, especially Argentina, have experienced pendular shifts in the implementation of public policies. While several factors might explain the pendular fluctuation in economic and social policies, there are important continuities in the dynamics of populist and oligarchic modes of doing politics. This paper will address these themes by focusing on the continuities in the way of exercising power by both populist and oligarchic governments in the region. To do so, the paper will revisit the main categories contained in the characterization of *delegative democracy*, a concept developed by Guillermo O'Donnell in the 1990s, like concentration of power in the executive, weak horizontal accountability, disregard of party politics, and low intensity citizenship. By applying these categories to the current experience in Argentina, the paper will attempt to answer the questions: "Is Macri a Plebiscitarian Presidente?" and if so, "What is the role of the UCR as its main ally?". The paper concludes with a discussion on how these continuities affect the quality of democracy.

Argentina: Human Rights: Concerns and Record

Graham Minter

Argentina's human rights record since the 1980s has been positive in many respects, but the country still faces serious challenges.

Most indigenous communities still lack legal recognition of their land rights. Police have used excessive violence against indigenous protesters.

There are signs that the rights to protest and freedom of expression are being eroded. Criminal procedures have been used to intimidate human rights defenders, who report increasing stigmatisation and smear campaigns.

Argentina needs to get the balance right between protecting the rights of its people as a whole and fully respecting the right to peaceful protest.

The Senate rejected a bill to decriminalise the termination of pregnancies up to 14 weeks. So most women seeking to terminate pregnancies will continue to risk death or incarceration.

In 2017, 251 femicides were reported but there were only 12 convictions.

Argentina has adopted an open policy towards migrants and refugees but there have been recent signs of a tougher approach.

Much has been done to bring to justice those who committed crimes during the military regimes, but impunity remains a serious challenge.

The IMF package: a default in the making?

Héctor Luisi

The "package" is the Stand-by Agreement signed between Argentina and the IMF in June, 2018, and since twice modified, suggesting it's been ineffective. What were the reasons for this Agreement in particular? There are no explanations, only speculations.

By December, 2015 the Argentine economy was in trouble. The incumbent government took measures to address the situation, which were unsuccessful. The economy deteriorated further and by early 2018 the IMF were called in. A substantial Agreement with sizeable disbursements was approved. The main objectives are to bring inflation down and to stabilise the peso. The key conditionality is to bring the primary fiscal deficit down to zero. A feature of the Agreement is, supposedly, to secure social expenditure to protect the most vulnerable. A 14-year old IMF Evaluation document of IMF/Argentina 1991-2001 relations draws ten lessons and makes six recommendations, which are

still valid today. However, none seem to have been taken into account. Why not?

The IMF have learned further lessons from their past. One is that they must arrest crises by favouring large programmes and substantial disbursements, probably a lesson learned from their adverse experience during the Greek crisis.

This Agreement depends on a major fiscal adjustment, which will require more time and effort than it's been given. The IMF probably seek two stop-gap outcomes: that 2019 ends with no unrest, and that sovereign debt is serviced on time and in full. Once the elections are over, the IMF will likely take a longer-term view.

Are the possible outcomes of the Agreement encouraging? No. Is there a default in the making? Unlikely. Could there be a debt-restructuring in the making? Perhaps.

Argentine crises: a task for Penelope the weaving and the unweaving of crises

Daniel Ozarow

Argentina has been prone to especially deep and frequent recessions since the mid-1970s when the economy became subject to liberalisation. This paper evaluates some of the 'conventional wisdom' that has been used to explain this, recording how it has repeatedly descended from virtuous to vicious cycles of crisis as have many emerging economies, but also some of the peculiarities of the Argentine experience. It argues that Argentina's perpetual cycle of crisis has not yet been broken because there has been a mis-diagnosis of some of the key causes. After five decades of the same failed neoliberal policy recipes and assumptions, radical solutions are required that counter some of the myths that go even further than those attempted by Kirchnerismo. For instance, the notion that servicing a near unsustainable external debt will end debt servitude should be replaced by the idea that its very legitimacy should be challenged as a basis for emancipation. Further, the myth that Argentina's perpetual fiscal deficits are caused by over-spending proliferated by President Macri and others has lost credibility given that subsequent austerity-based solutions that undermine growth that have repeatedly failed. Instead, while Argentina already has a high tax burden, the causes are understood to be a failure to raise sufficient income from the wealthiest sectors due to wide scale tax avoidance and the persistence of the informal economy. A series of measures are suggested such as closing tax loopholes and clamping down on offshores, a financial transaction tax on speculative capital, inheritance

tax and calling for a public debt audit with potential unilateral write-offs of illegitimate debt.

Will Investors flock to Argentina or flee?

Jerome Booth

Whilst investment may flock back again soon under certain condition, it can easily flee again. Global financial markets are currently poorly structured and regulated, and characterised by power and intelligence, but also collective stupidity and crisis. The deep-seated problems in Argentina are fiscal and linked to the relationship between the Provinces and Federal Government. The IMF has received much blame for Argentine programmes but has had limited scope to design comprehensive reforms. Global financial markets are pre-occupied with developed markets, with the world view of many participants based on deep prejudice. Finance theory is not fit for purpose and its inappropriate use has caused huge investment allocation distortions affecting hundreds of millions of people. The priority for Argentina should be to become less dependent on foreign capital and to focus on politically difficult structural fiscal reforms.

Capital Flight, Offshore Corruption and the Finance Curse

John Christensen

For decades capital flight has thwarted development in Latin America. And fingers have been pointed relentlessly at governments of country's like Argentina as being the cause of this capital flight and the damage done. This is a false narrative. Governments beyond the region play a key role in encouraging and facilitating capital flight, and in shaping the global rules that protect the activities of tax havens, almost all of which are located in, or associated with, OECD member states in the global North.

Tax havens provide a nexus for high level corruption which undermines democratic governments across the world, and Britain is a major player in this area, operating a network of tax havens which feed illicit financial flows into the City. However, inflows of illicit flight capital also harm the UK economy as a whole, exposing it to a political economic phenomenon known as the Finance Curse. The post-Brexit development strategy known as Singapore-on-the Thames will exacerbate problems in both the global South and in Britain.

