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# Foreign Policy of Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner, two different expressions of Peronism

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# Contents

Abstract.....	3
Introduction.....	14
1. Foreign Policy in Argentina – Historical overview.....	22
1.1 Introduction to Foreign Policy in Argentina – Political context before Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner.....	22
1.2 International Relationship of Argentina: Autonomy or Dependence .....	36
1.3 High and low concept in Argentine politics .....	40
2. Analysis of Menem’s foreign policy – The Neoliberalism in Argentina .	50
2.1 Political Context – the Change .....	50
2.2 Carlos Menem’s Foreign Policy: Peripheral Realism and the Relationship with the United States .....	58
2.3 Mercosur and the Relationship with South American Countries.....	66
3. Analysis of Kirchner’s foreign policy – Between rhetoric and pragmatism	75
3.1 Restoring Political Credibility: The Left Behind in South America.....	75
3.2 Integration with Latin American Countries and the “Mature” Relationship with the United States.....	83
3.3 A New Commercial Partner: China .....	91
4. Comparison of foreign politics, constants and differences between “first peronism” of Perón and the following former presidents .....	97
4.1 Peronism as a Populist Movement in Latin America.....	97
4.2 Peronism, Menemism, Kirchnerism: The Connections .....	102
4.3 Constants in Argentine Foreign Policy .....	111
4.4 Mauricio Macri: Argentine Foreign Policy in the Present.....	117
Conclusions.....	127
Bibliography .....	132

Sitography ..... 136

## Abstract

Questa tesi nasce con lo scopo di analizzare le decisioni, le azioni politiche e i fatti stessi di due passati Presidenti della Repubblica Argentina: Carlos Menem e Néstor Kirchner, entrambi appartenenti al movimento “Peronista”. Questo significa l’appartenenza di entrambi al movimento creato da Juan Domingo Perón nel 1946.

Nonostante entrambi fossero peronisti, le loro politiche furono sostanzialmente differenti, sotto molteplici aspetti. Questa tesi si focalizzerà sulle politiche estere messe in atto dai due presidenti e sarà perciò un’analisi degli aspetti centrali delle loro azioni di politica estera. Lo scopo sarà quello di riscontrare continuità così come discontinuità tra le due presidenze e capire quanto questo abbia influenzato la posizione occupata dall’Argentina a livello internazionale.

È importante sottolineare che il contesto politico dell’Argentina si caratterizza per essere stato, ed essere tutt’ora, un’oscillazione tra partiti e idee politiche più che diverse. In Argentina infatti si sono susseguiti Radicali, Peronisti, Conservatori, radicali nuovamente e così via. La politica estera in Argentina iniziò nel 1880, ovvero nel periodo successivo alla consolidazione dello stato Argentino. Fin da subito il ruolo dell’Argentina a livello internazionale fu quello di potenza agro-esportatrice, inizialmente con la Gran Bretagna come partner principale, e successivamente con gli Stati Uniti, a causa dell’indebolimento economico dei paesi europei dovuto alle guerre mondiali. A seconda del presidente in carica le relazioni internazionali dell’Argentina furono più o meno “aperte”.

Con il Presidente Hipólito Yrigoyen nei primi anni del 900, l’Argentina mantenne il proprio ruolo di principale partner commerciale dei paesi europei e grazie alla sua posizione neutrale durante la guerra conservò appunto relazioni commerciali con entrambe le fazioni protagoniste del conflitto mondiale. La stessa attitudine di “apertura al mondo” si riscontrò ad esempio durante il

governo del Presidente Arturo Frondizi nella metà del '900, grazie al piano economico denominato “desarrollista” (di sviluppo) che presupponeva un forte rapporto con gli Stati Uniti.

Tuttavia, l'Argentina dovette affrontare anche diversi periodi di chiusura nei confronti del resto del mondo, così come di forte nazionalismo. Questo soprattutto durante le due dittature che la attraversarono. La prima fu la famosa *decada infame*, successiva al governo di Hipólito Yrigoyen, e la seconda nei più recenti anni '70 con il presidente Jorge Rafael Videla. Una sorta di chiusura o comunque attitudine nazionalista forte si riscontrò anche nel primo governo di Juan Domingo Perón. L'obiettivo del Presidente era infatti quello di sviluppare l'economia nazionale e questo si tradusse nel cosiddetto piano ISI (Industrializzazione per Sostituzione di Importazione), che terminò però con un “nulla di fatto”. La seconda Presidenza di Perón infatti fu sicuramente meno nazionalista e pragmaticamente più vicina alle grandi potenze mondiali.

Da quanto detto si può quindi affermare che le varie politiche estere messe in atto dai Presidenti argentini hanno sempre avuto una costante, ovvero l'inserimento della Repubblica Argentina nel contesto internazionale. Vedremo come proprio il modello di inserimento nella scena internazionale sarà influenzato dalla tendenza più autonomista o più dipendentista del presidente in carica e soprattutto come questo si rifletterà sulla relazione dell'Argentina con gli altri paesi.

Per capire l'obiettivo di questa tesi, il lettore deve essere informato su cosa si intenda per peronismo e dunque per movimento “peronista”. Il Peronismo è comunemente definito come un movimento “populista”. Per capire cosa sia il peronismo è dunque essenziale sapere cosa si intenda con “populismo” e quali siano le caratteristiche fondanti di esso.

“Existe un zapato, la palabra “populismo”, para el cual existe un pie en algún lugar. Existen toda clase de pies que casi lo pueden calzar, pero no

nos deben engañar estos pies que casi ajustan a su medida. En la búsqueda, el príncipe siempre vaga errante con el zapato; y en algún lugar, estamos seguros, espera un pie denominado populismo puro.”

Grazie alla citazione riportata sopra è chiaro come non sia semplice definire il populismo. Questo infatti ha molteplici aspetti da tenere in considerazione, come ad esempio la tipologia di leadership messa in atto da un determinato presidente, il suo regime politico o relativo partito, la sua ideologia guida e così via (Funes 2014, 188). Una questione importante da tenere bene a mente è che in America Latina non ci sono movimenti politici che si siano definiti populistici. La definizione di “populismo” viene sempre data a posteriori. L’essere definito “populista” viene sempre visto da un determinato movimento come qualcosa di non troppo positivo, evidenziato dal fatto che, per l’appunto, sia la destra che la sinistra politica abbiano sempre criticato i populismi.

Nonostante sia difficile definire con precisione un movimento come “populista”, ci sono però alcuni aspetti che sembrano essere comuni ad ogni movimento definito tale. Generalmente i movimenti populistici sono anti-liberali così come anti-comunisti e comunemente danno importanza al popolo ampliando, ad esempio, i diritti del Cittadino. I movimenti populistici parlano alle masse esercitando una leadership e un autoritarismo molto forte e allo stesso tempo caratterizzante.

Solitamente il contesto in cui nascono i movimenti populistici è un contesto di transizione, crisi e insoddisfazione. È proprio questo contesto “difficile” che permette ai leader populistici di acquisire potere in quanto vengono visti come dei veri e propri “salvatori” (Zanatta 2004). Questo concetto è perfettamente in linea con quello del 1800 in cui ad acquisire la posizione di salvatori erano i così detti “caudillos”. L’immagine del leader populista è quella di un “manager” che, sfruttando la situazione di crisi in cui si trova il popolo in quel preciso momento, riesce a prendere il potere e a convertire tale situazione a suo favore.

Nello specifico, il populismo come Peronismo viene definito “terza posizione”, non essendo né di matrice liberale né comunista, rappresentando dunque una terza via, alterativa alle due precedenti.

Il movimento si basa su tre pilastri fondamentali che sono conseguentemente gli obiettivi che esso si prefigge: Sovranità politica, indipendenza economica e Giustizia sociale.

Vedremo come questi obiettivi, sebbene perseguiti in maniera diversa, saranno comuni ad entrambi i presidenti analizzati da questa tesi.

Per quanto riguarda il presidente populista, un aspetto importante del peronismo che lo identifica come “movimento populista” è proprio la capacità del presidente di adattare le proprie politiche alla situazione politica, sociale ed economica che incontra all’inizio del proprio mandato. I presidenti peronisti/populisti adattano le loro politiche alla realtà.

Questa caratteristica di dinamicità del Peronismo è una costante in tutte le presidenze peroniste e allo stesso tempo ne è la vera forza. Il fatto che il peronismo sia così “ampio”, estendendosi dalla destra alla sinistra, è giustificato dalla presenza di un leader forte che sappia gestire tutte queste sfaccettature presenti in uno stesso movimento politico. Di fatto il peronismo è un movimento estremamente presidentialista. I presidenti peronisti sono manager che adattando le loro politiche affrontando le situazioni di crisi in maniera dinamica.

È proprio questo dinamismo che fa sì che le normali caratterizzazioni politiche di destra e di sinistra non siano sufficienti per spiegare e contestualizzare un movimento come il peronismo. La vicinanza di tale movimento con il popolo e la classe operaia sembra spostare il movimento a sinistra, allo stesso tempo però la dottrina Cristiana su cui si basa e l’importanza che dà alla concentrazione di potere, lo spostano a sua volta verso destra.

A tale proposito le caratterizzazioni politiche definite da Ostiguy come “high and low” (alto e basso) sono molto più affini alla definizione di peronismo, riempiono infatti un vuoto lasciato in precedenza dalla classica definizione di “destra e sinistra”. Nello specifico la definizione di “low” sembra incarnare perfettamente il significato di Peronismo. P. Ostiguy nel suo articolo definisce la posizione “low” come la perfetta spiegazione del peronismo e a sua volta “high” quella dell’anti Peronismo.

L’esistenza dell’asse “low” è ciò che permette la differenziazione di destra e sinistra nel Peronismo. Sembra quindi essere scorretto definire il Peronismo solo come appartenente alla destra o alla sinistra della politica. Questo non perché non ci sia una destra o una sinistra nel Peronismo, ma proprio perché, esistendo entrambe, risulta essere necessaria una definizione addizionale più specifica. Il concetto di “low” dà una risposta che la destra e la sinistra non riescono a dare riguardo al concetto di Peronismo.

Questa definizione è di essenziale importanza per capire le differenze che caratterizzano le politiche dei due presidenti che questa tesi prende in analisi: in base alle loro politiche, Carlos Menem e Nestor Kirchner possono venir definiti come appartenenti all’asse low-right e low-left, rispettivamente, della politica.

Una politica estera definita appartenente all’asse low-left risulterà essere più incline all’autonomia, in termini di relazioni a livello internazionale. Sicuramente più nazionalista e non completamente sottomessa alle grandi potenze internazionali, come gli Stati Uniti. Questa è precisamente come può essere definita la politica estera di Nestor Kirchner. Conseguentemente, i governi che si avvicinano maggiormente alle egemonie vengono definiti appartenenti all’asse low-right e di conseguenza seguiranno politiche maggiormente dependentiste, come nel caso del governo di Carlos Menem.

Il potere dell'egemonia "in carica" era percepito diversamente dai diversi governi Argentini, e l'accettazione o meno di tale egemonia ne definisce la tendenza autonomista o dipendentista di tale governo

I governi autonomisti si caratterizzano per il loro focalizzarsi nel proprio primo sviluppo scegliendo come partner paesi con simili caratteristiche e risorse. Piuttosto che sottomettersi completamente alle grandi potenze mondiali, scelgono di semmai intraprendere una relazione "matura" con queste.

Analizzando le politiche estere messe in atto durante i governi di Carlos Menem e Nestor Kirchner, con le eventuali costanti che li caratterizzeranno, risulterà chiara alla fine la tendenza più autonomista o dipendentista di ciascuno dei due.

Volendo analizzare le due presidenze nello specifico, è importante sottolineare che ad esempio la presidenza di Carlos Menem iniziò negli anni '90, dunque in pieno inizio di quella che sarebbe stata definita successivamente come un'ondata di globalizzazione. Il mondo iniziava ad essere più collegato, soprattutto a livello di commercio, e il neoliberalismo nacque come nuova tendenza politica che perfettamente incarnava gli ideali di questa epoca. Menem iniziò il suo mandato nel bel mezzo di una profonda crisi e proprio questa situazione di estrema emergenza gli permise di avere ancora più fiducia da parte dei cittadini che aspettavano disperatamente un "salvatore".

Allo stesso tempo questo permise a Menem di sviluppare misure politiche ed economiche estreme, come fu quella del "piano di convertibilità". Il così detto "piano di convertibilità" messo in atto dal governo Menem, consisteva nel dare alla moneta locale, il Peso Argentino, lo stesso valore del dollaro Americano. Per poter mantenere tale convertibilità era necessario mantenere elevati gli investimenti in dollari e quindi l'entrata di valuta Americana in Argentina: ciò a sua volta richiese un importante piano di privatizzazioni.

Il piano di convertibilità infatti, determinò una posizione di “dipendenza” da parte dell’Argentina nei confronti del dollaro Americano, e di conseguenza di dipendenza dai “mezzi” per entrarne in possesso, ovvero gli investimenti esteri e le esportazioni.

La politica estera messa in atto da Carlos Menem fu caratterizzata da quello che lo scrittore Carlos Escudè definì a posteriori “realismo periferico”.

Il realismo periferico è una teoria che si basa sul fatto che un paese debole e sottosviluppato deve implementare politiche estere basate sui propri cittadini per ottenere risultati reali e tangibili. Queste politiche richiedono un approccio realistico che tenga in considerazione tutti i fattori che influenzano la vita dei cittadini, fattori sia interni che esterni.

Durante il governo di Menem, la realtà era precisamente che l’egemonia a livello mondiale era rappresentata dagli Stati Uniti e dunque, proprio come spiegato da questa teoria, l’Argentina accettò la potenza degli Stati Uniti posizionandosi al suo fianco piuttosto che cercando un approccio più confrontativo.

È chiaro dunque che l’obiettivo del presidente Carlos Menem era quello di posizionare l’Argentina nel *primer mundo*, attraverso politiche pragmatiche e consapevoli della realtà. Menem costituì un network di relazioni internazionali che differenziarono sostanzialmente il suo governo da quelli precedenti, e che diedero nuovo spazio all’Argentina nel contesto internazionale.

La costituzione del Mercosur (Mercato comune del sud) nel 1991 fu sicuramente funzionale al piano politico ed economico del Presidente. Il Mercosur infatti inizialmente fu figlio dell’epoca in cui nacque, ovvero il periodo neoliberale. Il Neoliberalismo si fondava sul libero mercato, e proprio la creazione di un libero mercato per facilitare lo scambio di beni fu il primo obiettivo del Mercosur. Non poteva essere altrimenti in un’epoca in cui

l'Argentina puntava a far entrare nel paese la maggior quantità di dollari Americani di modo da poter mantenere in vita il piano economico istituito dal Presidente. Questi obiettivi puramente economici furono poi sviluppati dai governi successivi includendo politiche di natura più sociale.

Per quanto riguarda invece il governo costituito dal presidente Nestor Kirchner nel 2003, questo rappresentò il ritorno della sinistra al potere in Argentina. Vedremo come il suo successo dipese dal fallimento dei governi precedenti e soprattutto dal fallimento del modello neoliberista.

Nestor Kirchner assunse la presidenza in un periodo di profonda crisi interna, successivo infatti alla tragica crisi economica del 2001. Il suo obiettivo principale era quello di ricostituire la credibilità della classe politica in Argentina in termini così politici come economici. Tale credibilità voleva essere ristabilita principalmente ridando allo stato il suo ruolo all'interno del mercato di modo da prevenire nel modo più assoluto che ricapitasse quanto successo nel 2001.

Per ristabilire la situazione a livello sociale uno dei mezzi utilizzati fu quello di concedere i cosiddetti "aid plans", ovvero i piani di aiuti sociali che prendevano direttamente ispirazione da quelli creati da Juan Domingo Peron durante la sua presidenza. Questo è un elemento fondamentale perché fa capire come con Kirchner ci fu, quanto meno inizialmente, un tentativo di ritorno al peronismo di Peron.

Sempre in quest'ottica, i discorsi pubblici presidenziali facevano emergere un'intenzione di indipendenza dalle egemonie, ovvero dagli Stati Uniti, in piena ottica low-left. Vedremo però che la profonda relazione creata negli anni 90' con gli Stati Uniti sarà qualcosa di molto difficile da sciogliere.

Abbiamo già visto come i paesi definiti più "autonomisti" puntino a stabilire relazioni con i paesi vicini e di simili risorse. Questo è il caso del Brasile e

dell'Argentina. Sicuramente il governo di Nestor Kirchner si avvicinò al Brasile, soprattutto dopo la crisi del 2001. Bisogna però puntualizzare che le divergenze tra il presidente Lula Da Silva e Kirchner, in un certo momento storico fecero avvicinare l'Argentina ad un altro paese dell'America Latina: il Venezuela. Tali divergenze riguardavano principalmente la riforma del consiglio di sicurezza, la creazione del “South American Community of Nations” e una visione molto diversa su come affrontare la crisi economica da parte dei due paesi. Questo portò nel 2006 al processo di ingresso del Venezuela nel Mercosur, fortemente incentivato dall'Argentina, e alla firma di numerosi trattati bilaterali tra i due paesi dal 2003 al 2007.

Seguendo questo filone “indipendentista” Kirchner chiamò il suo modello politico “modello proprio” per evidenziare come questo volesse segnare una profonda spaccatura con quanto fatto dai governi precedenti e soprattutto “proprio” nel senso di “non dipendente” dagli Stati Uniti. Vedremo però come nonostante questo “modello proprio” il governo Kirchner continuò ad implementare relazioni con gli Stati Uniti condividendo piani politici ed economici. Quello che si può evidenziare è che Kirchner quanto meno abbandonò l'allineamento automatico con gli Stati Uniti per raggiungere una relazione definita “matura”. È proprio questa relazione “matura” ad essere la sottile linea che separa gli intenti autonomisti derivanti dai suoi discorsi pubblici da invece una più pragmatica vicinanza con la super potenza.

Una delle ragioni per mantenere una relazione essenzialmente amichevole con gli Stati Uniti era la terribile situazione che l'Argentina stava passando a causa dell'enorme debito esterno. Mantenere buone relazioni con l'egemonia era fondamentale per tentare di scrivere la parola fine al debito, come spiegato dal ministro degli esteri Bielsa:

“Estados Unidos es un país amigo con el que tenemos un intercambio comercial importante para nosotros, y además tenemos un severo

problema de deuda y en todas las instancias la voz de Estados Unidos es una voz no trivial.”

Mantenere relazioni con gli Stati Uniti era inoltre essenziale considerando il fatto che l'Argentina, a causa della crisi, stava diventando poco rilevante come paese a livello internazionale e dunque aveva bisogno di un partner forte per ritrovare la propria credibilità, cosa che fra l'altro tentò di fare anche con la nuova potenza emergente, ovvero la Cina.

Da quanto detto finora sembra chiaro che la relazione dell'Argentina con gli Stati Uniti sia una delle più grandi costanti in termini di politica estera. Abbiamo visto come durante il governo di Carlos Menem, grazie all'ondata di globalizzazione, le precedenti politiche di sostituzione di importazione si siano trasformate in qualcosa di “senza senso” e di come invece ne abbia acquisito l'averne un paese forte come partner economico. Allo stesso modo durante il governo Kirchner le relazioni forti con gli Stati Uniti non sono cessate, semmai si sono trasformate in qualcosa di più “maturo” e contemporaneo.

Per valutare la posizione dell'Argentina a livello internazionale, a tutto questo va aggiunto il fatto che il paese latino americano è sempre stato caratterizzato dal modello agro-esportatore, classificandosi quindi come “il granaio del mondo”. Questo creò una grossa dipendenza dell'Argentina nei confronti del capitale straniero e di fatto ha bloccato una possibile indipendenza a livello di produzione di manufatti.

Va quindi evidenziato come il modello agro-esportatore sia il modello dominante nell'economia argentina ed è proprio questo modello a richiedere un partner forte in grado di investire nell'economia argentina. Questa è proprio la base della dipendenza. Ci sono dunque alcuni fattori, principalmente economici che hanno fatto sì che l'Argentina fosse dipendente dagli investimenti e dai

capitali degli altri paesi, principalmente dagli Stati Uniti, indipendentemente dalla ideologia politica al potere in quel preciso momento. Indipendentemente dunque da low-left o da low-right. Le politiche attuali e il recente accordo con l’FMI firmato dal governo del presidente Mauricio Macri ne sono la prova. Anche in questi tempi più recenti infatti l’Argentina si trova nel mezzo di una profonda crisi economica che ha portato il Presidente a chiedere un prestito di 57,1 miliardi di dollari al Fondo Monetario Internazionale.

## Introduction

“Argentines are 30% radicals (...), 30% conservative, and another group is socialist.”

“But, General, what about Peronists?” “No, no! Argentines are all Peronists!”  
(General Juan Domingo Perón)

With this phrase, Perón clearly depicts how the movement which he created in 1946 has marked Argentina’s national history and how widespread and difficult to define it has become.

From the 90s to 2007, two prominent representatives of the Peronist movement became President of the Argentine Republic: Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner. The purpose of this thesis is to analyse political decisions, actions, and facts of these two presidents. Being ‘Peronist’ means that they have both belonged to the party created by Juan Domingo Perón in 1946. Through a profound study of their personalities and political decisions, this thesis examines how these factors have a considerable influence on the current economic, social, and political position of Argentina.

Moreover, this thesis is an analysis of the central aspects of the Argentine foreign policy during the administrations of presidents Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner. Its purpose is to comprehend the role adopted by Argentina at the international level and the influence of both presidents, considering their implemented policies and their political movement. This analysis will result in a parallel comparison of both presidents in foreign policy terms. In the last part, the focus will be on the present, with President Mauricio Macri, to identify which constants of Foreign policy in Argentina are still present, if any. This is with the aim to highlight how, despite the political side in office, foreign policies of Argentina have some continuities. Comparing Mr. Macri’s foreign policies between Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner ones would be an additional analysis

for the policies of these two Peronist presidents. A different point of view based on the comparison with the present.

The constant in foreign policies of Argentina is the insertion into the international context. We will see how the autonomous or dependent tendency of the president in office influenced the model of insertion and even how this influenced the relationship with other countries.

Nevertheless, understanding Peronism and its main aspects is key for a thorough analysis of Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner's policies. In the wake of a six-year *coup d'état*, Argentiniens voted democratically on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1946 and General Juan Domingo Perón was elected President of the Argentine Republic.

With this motivation, some of the elements which characterized Mr. Perón's administration were, for instance, the organization of celebrations for the working class such as the huge demonstrations taking place at Plaza de Mayo, the main square in Buenos Aires, every 1st May (Workers' Day). He created a system which seemed to hold the working class involved and as the protagonist of the political scene of that time.

During his first years in office, all his policies focused on the needs of the workers and, at the same time, aimed at the industrialization of the country. For achieving the latter, one of the implemented policies was the nationalization of public services, such as the railway system as promised during his campaign.

Peronism is the so-called "third way," since it is considered neither communism nor liberalism. Its main goal was to make Argentina economically independent and to achieve social justice and political sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> These "goals" are the

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<sup>1</sup> La tercera posición en la prédica y el ejemplo de Perón (1946) Buenos Aires: Presidencia de la Nación, Secretaría de Presa y Difusión

renowned three banners of Peronism; this concept will be subject of further analysis in the next pages.

During his stay in Italy in 1938, General Juan Domingo Perón experienced the impact of Mussolini and the Fascist party in the country. He was fascinated at the fascist regime, chiefly for its ability to draw the crowds, the working class. He understood, however, the difficulty of creating a fascist movement in Argentina in terms of acceptance by the right party.

In Argentina, Catholicism has always been the predominant religion in the country. For this reason, all the movements and parties founded during the 20th century involved Catholicism as part of their main principles and values. The aforementioned “third-way” component of Peronism is also present in its religious approach (Zanatta 2010, 133-138). The 1943 coup d’état marked the triumph of the Catholic nation and the defeat of the liberal project (Zanatta 2014, 14-15). Mr. Perón was able to place his movement in an extremely Catholic society embodying the same ideals of Catholicism: national unity and social equity against the divide created by capitalism (Zanatta 2014, 16-17). Therefore, Peronism proves unique in this sense, giving Catholicism a new approach considering the context of Argentina.

The rising to power of Mr. Perón in the political context of Argentina in 1946 meant the end of power held by the oligarchy and the turn for the middle class, then known as *descamisados*, to act and be represented. Peronist policies received an extremely popular support and had the working class as their main beneficiaries. He introduced concrete legislation and strengthened the labour unions (syndicates) as a guarantee of social rights for the working class.

The movement was based on three main pillars, which were the main goals of the movement Mr. Perón had dreamt of. These are:

- 1) Political sovereignty

2) Economic independence

3) Social justice<sup>2</sup>

The above-mentioned banners will be explained in detail at paragraph 4.2. Mr. Perón tried to attain the economic independence by implementing a process known as ISI (Import Substitution Industrialization), permitting Argentina to become independent from the importation of goods. Furthermore, the party's ambition was to create a stable working class with social benefits stemming from the right combination of capital and work. This need had aroused after the economic and social outlook of the European countries, the biggest exporters to Argentina, as they were experiencing the Second World War and its aftermath. Indeed this situation did not precisely make them the best or most trustworthy commercial partners that they had once been.

Independently from all the implemented policies and the benefits deriving from them, the key to success of Mr. Perón was his lack of affiliation to the right or the left. Peronism was clearly *tercera posición* (the third way) because it was neither capitalist nor communist (Zanatta 2004). Peronism was open to both sides and went beyond parties. This was possible due to the definition of Peronism as a movement and not as a party per se, attracting the crowds independently from their position in the political spectrum.

Moreover, peronists had never defined themselves as “populists.” The retrospective historical analysis was what actually defined the movement as such from its birth and onwards.

“However, the inspiring and preventive phrase of the coup d'état in Brazil ‘let's conduct a revolution before the People do it,’ enunciated by President of Minas de Gerais Antônio Carlos Ribeiro de Andrada, would show to what extent

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<sup>2</sup> (De Simone 2013)

highly empirical solutions like the so-called populisms took into account the radical transformation of the period: the crowds and the power.” (Funes 2014, 186)

In the 30s and 40s, an atmosphere of restlessness loomed in Latin America due to the Mexican Revolution of the 20s. Therefore, became necessary for the government to manage this political upheaval before the power shifted to the population. The liberal tendency of European politics in the previous years stood for the failure of this model, with the triggering of the Second World War in the 40s as the main representation of such failure. Hence a new model was hence needed. A model which proved distant from liberalism and communism and considered the importance of the crowds before the individuals as the current representing value of the region.

The aftermath of the Mexican Revolution required a major role of the government in Latin American countries. This demand translated in Argentina as the labour policies implemented by Mr. Perón. These regulations were a tool for keeping the population under control and to prevent possible revolutions, as part of a philosophy consisting in satisfying the people’s demands before they started fighting for their rights and provoked another revolution.

The populist leader established a bond of paternal connotation with the electorate. This incited an addictive attitude from the crowds towards the leader, as they had seen themselves recognised and saved after years of anonymity during the liberal period. Thus, the leader did not only rule the state, but also the population.

Populism placed itself between communism and liberalism. Not completely communist, as it did not use the social fight to reach its goals but was in favour of social peace. At the same time, not completely liberal, as it was in favour of state intervention in social affairs. The populist movement claimed that the

absence of the state was the exact cause that allowed communism to rise. (Funes 2014)

Therefore, the two elements which mostly characterized the 30s and 50s in Latin America were statism (strong presence of the state) and the social inclusion project. The trend of social intervention had its inception in the 30s, induced by the 1929 crisis when a state intervention was the only option to sort the situation. State intervention in social matters affected the economy as well. Indeed, the populist governments controlled the economy with the nationalization of the industry.

Mr. Perón's main policy in this regard was the ISI project, with an attempt to foster local industry and the country's economic sovereignty. For instance, applying duties to imported meat as a clear way of promoting local production of meat. This result is a clear example of intervention policies implemented to control both social and economic affairs, leaving political orientation aside and focusing on being a party for everyone.

What fostered the birth of the populist movement was a phenomenon of the 30s: urbanization. Crowds of rural population moved from the countryside to the city. People were closer to each other, living the same reality. This common feeling eased the creation of groups with the objective of fighting for their rights. The need of a leader created a perfect environment for the growth and development of a movement as populism.

However, despite dedicated support from the crowds, populist leaders do not define themselves as such. This may be connected to detractors claiming that their social policies are implemented with strategic purposes instead of doing so for reaching growth and development.

Political scientist Francisco Weffort asserts that populism can occur where the oligarchy is in crisis (Weffort 1978). Hence, populism implements strong

measures to reach development, which means a step forward for the working class and for the populist leader. However, the movement and their participants can become autonomous.

Populism represents the dissatisfaction of the working class, which is used by the populist to reach consensus and stay in power. Nevertheless, the crowds become powerful and autonomous. Populism may delay class consciousness, but it does not block it. Weefort provides an explanation as to how two combined forces permitted this movement to get to office and control the country in the 30s and the 50s. These forces are the elite's fear towards a radical transformation in society and working class' dissatisfaction trying to create a social transformation. Despite this movement never becoming a totalitarian regime in Argentina, there is a clear authoritarian tendency in Peronism when analysing such controlling intentions towards society.

Besides its totalitarian tendencies, Peronism was a movement and not a party: it grouped both left and right. The subject of discussion will be the study of Peronism and its right and left components.

Taking all these elements under consideration, it is possible to understand how strong and influencing the Peronist movement was in the political scene of Argentina. It was deeply rooted in politics but even in the everyday life of the population. The expansion of the movement, with presence in a wide variety of social sectors, made it complex. For this reason, even if Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner were both Peronists, their policies were completely different.

For this thesis, articles, interviews, quotations, and verbal testimonies of experts in Argentine foreign policy have been used as sources. My experience as exchange student in Argentina was fundamental to introduce me to the Argentina political system. Politics was a topic of daily discussion among the people I met. This is the reason why I have decided to get decipher the matter.

The first chapter is an introduction to Argentine foreign policy from 1880 onwards. This chapter focuses on the mechanisms that drive its international relations, and its domestic political context as well, by using Ostiguy's low-high theory as an explanation of South American politics.

The second chapter studies Carlos Menem's presidential mandate. This chapter explores the impact of his neoliberal policies and the theory of peripheral realism on the role of Argentina at the international level.

The third chapter studies Néstor Kirchner's presidential mandate. This chapter explores his policies to address the complex context of Argentina after the economic crisis of 2001 and the challenge of restoring credibility to the political class. This new administration means a shift from neoliberalism and the establishment of new trade partners such as China.

The fourth chapter, as a result to the preceding chapters, compares Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner's administrations: the aspects in common that make them belong to Peronism, and the discrepancies that lead to the emergence of Menemism and Kirchnerism. This analysis tries to shed some light on how Peronism, the most influencing political movement in Argentina, has become such a multidimensional phenomenon, and its impact at the international level. A confrontative verbal discussion with Professor Paola de Simone was one of the main source for this chapter.

At the end of this chapter, the focus will shift towards the aspects of Mr. Mauricio Macri's current administration, trying to understand the continuities, if any, after Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner and also the actual situation of the foreign policies in Argentina.

The first three chapters are an introduction to the Argentine foreign policy from a historical point of view, providing context and consciousness. Contrarily, the last chapter serves as a result to the previous three

# 1. Foreign Policy in Argentina – Historical overview

The political context in Argentina from 1916 to the times of Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner consisted of a succession of different political parties, from radicals to Peronists, conservatives, and radicals again. In this chapter, this alternation phenomenon in the Argentine political context will be our scope of work, with the purpose of understanding how this influenced the position of Argentina at international level, by using Ostiguy's low-high theory as an explanation of South American politics. The aim is to figure out the tendency of each presidency in terms of autonomy and dependence from other countries.

## 1.1 Introduction to Foreign Policy in Argentina – Political context before Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner

Argentine foreign policy commenced in 1880 with the consolidation of the Argentine state. At that time, the hegemon country was Great Britain. Argentina's position at the international level was based on the *modelo agroexportador* (agro-export model), with Great Britain as its main commercial partner. The agro-export model established the economic role of Argentina at international level as an exporter of agricultural raw material. This model was a constant in the Argentine economy, even after external circumstances such as the shift of hegemony, as it happened after the First World War, turning from Great Britain to the United States (De Simone 2014).

Precisely in 1912, after the Saenz Peña Law was passed, Hipólito Yrigoyen became the first Argentine president to be elected through the universal, secret, and compulsory male suffrage. He belonged to the radical party, the main

opposition to Peronism after 1946. Mr. Yrigoyen's foreign policy was characterized by the historical context of his mandate: The First World War. This context influenced Argentina's relationship with the countries facing the war.

Despite Argentina playing a neutral role during the total military conflict, Mr. Yrigoyen's principles of *no intervención* (no intervention) were perceived by many as an active no intervention. The president did not explicitly express his neutrality since it was a position that Argentina had already assumed before his mandate.

Even then, Argentina's neutrality did not affect its commercial relationship with either the allied countries or central empires. This was in fact the main reason Argentina stayed strongly neutral: keeping trade connections with both sides. The country was extremely dependent from foreign trade and its neutrality knew no limits when it came to foreign relationships.

Regardless Argentina's neutral role during the war, the Great War deeply affected the commercial activity between Argentina and the European countries, primarily Great Britain and Germany. By 1917, the United States had become the main commercial partner of Argentina, representing 32.2% of Argentina's foreign trade, compared to 12.8% in 1914 (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 212).

By 1918, Hipólito Yrigoyen's neutral attitude towards the war was widely considered as "benevolent neutrality," since his policies were mostly in favour of the allies (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 214). Argentina started to be closer to the United States, both in political and economic terms. The allied countries had become the exclusive commercial partners of Argentina for the export of cereals in 1918 (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 215).

Mr. Yrigoyen's decisions on foreign policy matters were undoubtedly and profoundly driven by his relationship with powerful countries such as the United

States. In concordance with his no intervention policy, the country maintained its neutrality in political grounds, but proved exactly the opposite when it concerned economic relations.

Hipólito Yrigoyen's second administration, which took place from 1928 to 1930, saw an intensified presence of the United States' relevance in the international context. The Kellogg-Briand Pact was one of its most representative examples. Indeed the United States signed an agreement with France at a first stage, and then involving 63 more countries. Nevertheless, Argentina refused its participation in the agreement because of the American army's presence in Salvadoran lands.

Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, and El Salvador held views against the American presence, as they considered it against the principles of the pact. The United States' relevance in the international context was becoming even more controversial, risking its relation especially with countries of the South American continent. Therefore, despite its growing global relevance, the United States experienced some tension in this regard.

President Yrigoyen suffered a military coup in 1930, giving way to the lamentable period known as *Década Infame* (the Infamous Decade), characterized in foreign affairs by a full closure to the rest of the world and a profound nationalism. This period consisted of three presidencies: José Félix Uriburu (1930 - 1932), Agustín Pedro Justo (1932-1938), Roberto M. Ortiz (1938-1942) and Ramón Castillo (1942-1943).

The authoritarian regime imposed nationalism through different economic measures such as severe import duties and a fixed monetary exchange rate, in an attempt to fully control the economic system of Argentina. As an example, in 1931 when Mr. Uriburu was in office, his government adopted an exchange control regime that centralized the entry and exit of money in Argentina. The

new regime translated in troubling economic relations with countries as Great Britain and laid the foundations for the further agreement with them: the Roca-Runciman Treaty. (S. Munoz 2010)

During Mr. Uriburu's mandate, the 30s economic crisis seriously affected the trade links with countries involved in the war, as shown on the table below. Argentina was the most affected country between 1928 and 1938 in terms of exportations with a -57% variation. As per table below.

**LA DEPRESION EXPORTADORA - Exportaciones en 1928 y 1938 (millione de dolares)**

	1928	1938	Variacòn %
<b>Argentina</b>	1.018	438	-57,0
<b>Africa</b>	1.305	1.021	-21,8
<b>Canada y EE.UU.</b>	6.618	4.027	-39,2
<b>America Latina</b>	3.184	2.021	-36,5
<b>Asia</b>	5.026	3.337	-33,6
<b>URSS</b>	413	257	-37,8
<b>Europa</b>	15.139	10.478	-30,8
<b>Oceania</b>	930	776	-17,1
<b>Total mundial</b>	32.615	21.917	-32,8

Figure 1.1 <sup>3</sup> Fonte: League of Nations (1942)

During Mr. Justo's mandate, the commercial relation with the UK was re-established in 1933 with the Roca-Runciman Treaty. The European country had undergone a crisis due to the First World War and the troublesome presence of

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<sup>3</sup> in (Llach, Gerchunoff 2003)

the United States. On 10 January 1933, Argentine Vice-President Julio Argentino Roca Jr. was in the United Kingdom to negotiate a trade agreement with British Minister of Commerce Walter Runciman with the objective of facilitating the international exchange between the two countries (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 243).

The pact meant a compromise for the United Kingdom to avoid imposing any limit to Argentina's meat imports into the country. In case of a necessity to reduce the imports from Argentina at a rate higher than 10%, imports from all its other importing countries would also be diminished. The pact ensured stable export quotas for Argentina's meat to the United Kingdom. Argentina was negotiating an export amount of no less than 390,000 tons (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 244). of meat. The goal of this pact was to drive Argentina to a higher economical development thanks to the closer relationship with the United Kingdom. On the other hand, Argentina had to ensure not to increase custom duties on all British goods.

The *Década Infame* was a deeply nationalist period for Argentina but at the same time established international relationships for increasing its economic power. However, Argentine foreign policy would face a completely new scenario with the arrival of a new political figure: General Juan Domingo Perón.

The new democratically elected president Mr. Perón, and his political movement—Peronism—came into the political scene. Argentine politics were shifting from a highly conservative era to times of a completely different identity.

Hitherto, this thesis has explored the basic points of Peronism, albeit with limitations on the foreign policy front. As previously mentioned in fact Peronism is the so-called “third way,” since it is considered neither communism nor liberalism.

During his first years in office, Gral. J.D. Peron's policies focused on the needs of the workers with social benefits stemming from the right combination of capital and labour and, at the same time, aimed at the industrialization of the country by implementing a process known as ISI (Import Substitution Industrialization). For achieving the latter, one of the implemented policies was the nationalization of public services, such as the railway system, as promised during his campaign. Therefore, the two elements which mostly characterized the 30s and 50s in Latin America were statism (strong presence of the state) and the social inclusion project.

Having explained the context in this matter during the former administrations, the foreign policies adopted during Juan Domingo Perón's administration will now come into focus.

As previously exposed, one of Peronism's main principles was "economic independence." From a closer inspection, Perón's policies did not look so new. He promoted a profound state intervention in the economy, placing it "at the service" of the state. Nationalization and controlled foreign trade was something that had already been seen in Argentine during former administrations, especially in the 30s. Nevertheless, Peronism's novelty was its determined belief to end with exports dependence to countries as the United Kingdom (chiefly represented by Roca-Runciman Treaty) and with the import dependence of industrial products, primarily imported from the United States. (Zanatta 2008, 55)

In 1946, Mr. Perón was afraid to be victim of the unstable outlook of the countries that had been involved in the Second World War and that were now involved in the Cold War. The economic and social struggle incurred by them gave him enough reasons to try to achieve economic independence.

This closure to international trade was the exact measure taken after the First World War during President Hipólito Yrigoyen's term, and Mr. Perón did not want to allow the history to repeat itself. Hence, he would try to implement the national market, for instance with the previously named ISI plan.

Argentina saw economic stability during the war, as now a significant amount of money was available to invest in this "independence programme." Mr. Perón's plan was to nationalize as many sectors of the economy as possible.

His first nationalization plan was implemented in the agricultural sector with the "IAPI" plan (Argentine Institute for the Promotion of Exchange). Its objective was to thoroughly control foreign trade. Farmers sold their products to the state, which were later reallocated in the international market.

Accordingly to this plan, in 1946, the Government purchased national products at half their value and sold them to the national market at twice the original price. This circle was profitable both for the Argentine people and for the economy, since it set a lower limit for prices of goods for consumers, and income was reinvested in the economy. The industrialization process had already commenced. (Zanatta 2008)

With the intention of nationalizing as many sectors as possible, public services and energy resources came under the scope of the Government. After the nationalization of even the railways system, and under *Perón Cumple* motto (Perón fulfils), the Argentine economy became officially independent on 1st March 1948.

Although an independent economy and a neutral stance during both World Wars may have been positive for the national economy, international relations did not precisely benefit from it. The country's lack of involvement in the Second World War led to its exclusion from the Marshall Plan in 1947, an initiative by the United States which gave financial support to countries involved in the war.

Argentina did not participate of the programme as the United Nations considered its neutrality as lack of participation in the conflict.

Argentina kept a barely null relation with international organizations created in Bretton Woods (the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank), and held no involvement in the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT) in 1948. This political position arose from the idea that multilateral agreements only favoured developed countries and affected the least developed nations (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 331). These were the policies adopted by the so-called *Justicialismo* (Justicialist Party).

Therefore, in terms of international relations with the hegemony, Argentina preferred bilateral agreements, with Great Britain (1949), Poland (1948), Bulgaria (1949) and even with the United States (by asking for a loan to American EximBank, in 1950). The relationship with the United States was stabilized in 1947 with the membership of Argentina in the TIAR (Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance).

The political wave of the above mentioned *Justicialismo* was completely different from radical President Frondizi's administration. His pledges during the electoral campaign had made him gain the support of the Peronists and finally win the presidential elections in 1958. However, after taking office, his policies were loosely based on his promises, and even took an extremely differing path.

Mr. Frondizi's policies were based on developmentalism, a theory which claimed that the world was divided in a developed North and an undeveloped South. He recognized Argentina as an undeveloped country. His mission was to place the country among occidental countries and promote the integration process in the South American continent.

He supported the idea that each single country had first to develop individually until they all reached the same level, and only then they would be able to work together under equal treatment. For this, the American capital was fundamental. This project, known as *Integración y Desarrollo* (Integration and Development), made the Argentine economy shift from the independency of the Peronist administration to, once again, dependence.

This new objective set by Mr. Frondizi was not supported by the Peronists who voted for him. At the same time, radicals did not fully agree with it, and even less after seeing him sign agreements with multinational companies for the management of oil. Mr. Frondizi's government actually created a new way of oil production. The President left behind his purposes of nationalization and with this new model in mind allowed private companies to explore and exploit oil. As a result, during the first three years of his mandate, production of oil and natural gas increased by 150% (Muñoz, 2010). Instead of radical, nationalist, or Peronist, Mr. Frondizi's policies were seen as conservative.

For Argentina to become a developed country, Mr. Frondizi contacted many international leaders, unlike previous administrations. Thus a relation with international organizations was established, with its main representation being the 1958 agreement with the International Monetary Fund for solving the balance of payment crisis.

Argentina's relation with the United States proved to be more collaborative. An agreement with the Export-Import Bank based in Washington<sup>4</sup> and a scientific

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<sup>4</sup> 18 December 1958. It was a loan requested by Argentina to benefit private and public entities.

and technological agreement in 1959<sup>5</sup> strengthened the relation between the two countries.

However, apart from the United States, there was another country which became closer to Argentina during Frondizi's mandate: Cuba. On 16 January 1959, Fidel Castro became the president of Cuba after the revolution. Mr. Castro's assuming a communist position brought Cuba to conflict with the United States.

Indeed, inside the OAS (the Organization of American States), the Marxist-Leninist ideology of Cuba was considered inconsistent with the InterAmerican system of the organization.<sup>6</sup> This tension built up due to the ongoing Cold War, which divided the world in two blocs: those supporting the United States and those supporting the Soviet Union.

Mr. Frondizi did not aim to isolate Cuba for its nearness to the Soviet Union. His goal was to mediate the relationship between the United States and Cuba and avoid taking sides. The reason was that for Mr. Frondizi, the case of Cuba was not such isolate. According to the President, the whole continent was exposed to fall in a communist political tendency due to undevelopment conditions both in economic and social terms. This is the reason why, according to Mr. Frondizi, all Latin American countries should assemble in a Summit Meeting to discuss together the Cuban situation instead of adopting unilateral measures.

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<sup>5</sup> 9 September 1959. The United States assisted Argentina in terms of training in the nuclear field and in the acquisition of research material, the purpose of both activities was a pacific one.

<sup>6</sup> From 22-31 January 1962, the expulsion of Cuba from the OAS was voted and finally approved. Argentina abstained to vote, as well as Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, and Chile.

However, the Argentine Army was reluctant with the idea of having relations with Cuba; its influence forced the Executive Power to end diplomatic relations with the Caribbean country, demonstrating the Army's relevance at that time.

The submission of Argentina to the United States became even clearer with the Alliance for Progress,<sup>7</sup> a plan launched by President Kennedy in 1961 which allowed Argentina and other countries of the Americas to develop their economies, but with a deep use of American capital. During the Bogotá Conference (1960), Mr. Frondizi's plan to develop the South American region at a social and economic level was one of the most discussed topics. The agreement involved the members of the OAS (Organization of American States), another example of cooperation between the countries of the Americas with the United States.

The run to the economic development mission ended in 1966, when a military coup headed by Carlos Onganía was staged. Under his presidency and two more authoritarian administrations (until 1973 with President Alejandro Agustín Lanusse), the militaries' goal was to prevent communism from disseminating in the region, with even more nationalist policies. This process was known as the Argentine Revolution.

After this period, the Peronists were again back in power with President Hector José Cámpora, succeeded by Raúl Lastri, and Juan Domingo Perón succeeded by his wife, Isabel Peron (1974-1976). Further to the above, democracy was once more threatened in 1976 with Jorge Rafael Videla and the establishment of the last dictatorship in Argentina. Four presidents held power during the authoritarian regime: Jorge Rafael Videla (1976-1981), Roberto Eduardo Viola

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<sup>7</sup> 17 August 1961. American countries signed the charter in Punta del Este, Uruguay, establishing the cooperation between them.

(1981), Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri (1981-1982) and Reynaldo Benito Bignone (1982-1983).

The policy that drove the dictatorship in Argentina in that period was called *Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional* (National Security Doctrine). This policy led to paramount consequences at the international level owing to the accusation for the violation of human rights.

The National Security Doctrine was the response to the third presidency of Mr. Perón and the subversive threat of the extremist groups belonging to Peronism known as *Montoneros*. Any movement or act considered against the dictators was violently repressed. Democracy was considered an “open door” to communism. Anything against the *Doctrina* was strongly repressed, violating human rights, what caught the attention of countries across the world, including the United States, deteriorating international relations.

In 1977, during President J. Carter administration, the United States shrank its military aid to Argentina from 32 million to 15.7 million dollars in 1977 (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 428). In 1980, Mr. Carter decided to interrupt all the military aid, which resumed only in 1981 during President Ronald Reagan’s administration. Moreover, trade relations were reported between the Argentine Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Although Argentina was not in favour of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union was the best commercial partner for the exportation of grain.

The signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco was another conflicting episode between Argentina and the US. The pact treated the abolition of nuclear arms in South America, but Argentina denied to sign the pact as the Government would make use of nuclear power for pacific purposes as reprocessing uranium, and therefore did not pose a danger for the security of the international community.

The current antidemocratic situation in Argentina, in conjunction with Treaty of Tlatelolco episode, and the trade exchange with the USSR, the relations between Argentina and the US were extremely tense during this period. Nevertheless, the economic aid coming from the United States to Argentina never really stopped and even increased with President Reagan in 1981.

In terms of international relations, the event that mainly characterized Argentine foreign policy during the last dictatorship was the Malvinas war.<sup>8</sup> The general dissatisfaction of the population was at its climatic point during the dictatorship. In an attempt to revive nationalism, President Galtieri determined to resume the Malvinas Islands issue and start a war against the United Kingdom (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 464).

The government counted on the United States as their ally after having signed the TIAR<sup>9</sup> treaty. However, the United States did not cover its back, but its ancient ally's, the United Kingdom.

The conflict started on 2 April 1982 when Argentine troops reached the islands and the tension was at its highest level when the Argentina's cruiser Belgrano was sunk by a British submarine. It was a war that lasted just 75 days but with more than 700 victims for Argentina that by the way lost the war. The dictatorship ended in 1983 with the election of President Raúl Alfonsín. Mr. Alfonsín's victory meant both the return of democracy and of the Radical party, the main opposition to Peronism.

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<sup>8</sup> In 1833, Argentina had just become an independent country when the British Army took possession of the Malvinas Islands, which had previously belonged to Argentina.

<sup>9</sup> *Tratado Interamericano de Asistencia Recíproca* (Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance): pact signed on 2 September 1947. Art. 3.1 read "in case of (...) any armed attack by any state against a country of the Americas would be considered an attack against the whole American Continent."

After an analysis of 67 years of Argentine history, from Mr. Yrigoyen to Mr. Alfonsín, paramount changes in the country's policies and in its international relations can be appreciated; moreover, it is possible to notice how these shifts are intimately related to the political force in power.

The most evident constant seems to be the role of Argentina as an agricultural exporter, deeply in force from 1880 to 1946 when Mr. Perón tried to transform it with the ISI (Import Substitution Industrialization), though the result was not the expected. The great dependence of Argentina to foreign capital seems to block its independence from the importation of manufactured goods. Therefore, the agro-export model is the dominant model in Argentina, the only one that always worked. The other models required long term investments, something Argentina does not seem willing to do. With no other model in force, the only way of introducing capital into the country seems to be with agricultural exportation, but the obtained capital is not financial and therefore not directed to the industry.

This thesis will explore how two presidents belonging to the same party can, at the same time, implement completely different foreign policies. Their approach to the economy and the applied measures to introduce Argentina into the international context would vary considerably.

## 1.2 International Relationship of Argentina: Autonomy or Dependence

As earlier seen with the analysis of Argentine foreign policy until 1983, Argentina has always struggled to find its position in the international context, both in economic and political terms. A distinction can be drawn between the two positions adopted by Argentina depending on its sought role at the international level: autonomist and dependent; we shall see from whom and how.

Before 1983, there were two main factors that led Argentine politics to adopt a “dependent” tendency from the undisputed hegemony of that time —the United States.

The first factor was related to economic issues. From 1928 to the end of the Second World War (1946), European countries faced a loss of power due to the 1929 economic crisis and the Second World War, giving rise to a weaker and less attractive economy from Argentina’s perspective. The place left empty by the European countries was rapidly occupied by the United States.

Even so, the relationship with some European countries like Great Britain and the conservative governments in Argentina did not ever end. An example of this was the Roca-Runciman Treaty signed in 1933 during the so called “Década Infame,” when President Justo was in office.

The second main factor was a political problem. As analysed earlier, the political position of Argentina during the Second World War was merely “neutral.” This neutrality was not well accepted by the United States, forcing Argentina to adopt a clear stance. Thus Argentina in 1947 signed the TIAR agreement.

These two factors affected the relevance and the power of the United States for Argentina. This power was differently perceived by the Argentine governments and its acceptance (or not) marked the dependent or independent (“autonomist”) position of Argentina.

In the wake of the Second World War, two powers were confronted: The Soviet Union and the United States, triggering the Cold War. The powers involved strongly influenced the international context, thereby affecting the Argentine foreign policy as well.

The new foreign policy was thus divided into two main tendencies: the autonomists (chiefly during democratic governments) and the dependency from the United States (Simoniff 2010, 6). The President in office and his political ideology were evidently determining for the position that Argentina occupied at the international level.

Democratic and Peronist governments embraced an autonomist position, avoiding a submission to the new big powers (the US, the USSR). Argentina’s attempt to being independent had its drawbacks in financial terms, hence Mr. Perón’s efforts to restore its relationship with the United States at the end of his second term, just as Mr. Frondizi had done it.

The policy of “*Industrialización por sustitución de importaciones*” (ISI, Import Substitution Industrialization) required a closer relation with the main economic powers. The persistent changes in foreign policy complicated Argentina’s possibility of establishing steadier relations with the rest of the world. The 1976 dictatorship was the peak of this crisis, showing to the world the weakness of Argentina, reinforced by the Malvinas war in 1982 in view of the lack of support from the US and the defeat against the British.

More recently, after 1983, the autonomist or dependent positions adopted by Argentine governments are more comprehensible after studying its closest

partner. When autonomist trends were followed, Argentina has usually become closer to Brazil, a country with similar resources, embracing a side by side relation, instead of submission.

For example, Mr. Alfonsín's mandate can be considered autonomist by studying some key points in his implemented policies. Under his presidency, Argentina and Brazil signed agreements of nuclear cooperation in 1985, and a series of protocols in 1986 which laid the foundations of Mercosur. With the establishment of Mercosur regional bloc, developed during succeeding administrations, Argentina solved its issues of regional isolation.

The aim of Mercosur was to facilitate the commercial relationship between the two countries. The historical context enabled this process. In fact, Argentina was coming out from the dictatorship and new international trade policies were needed to generate regional cooperation and attain a new competitive level. In July 1986, Argentina and Brazil signed an agreement for the Argentine-Brazilian integration, composed of 12 commercial protocols.

Autonomist governments are hence characterized by focusing in their own development and of partner countries of similar characteristics, being able to face the global economy, instead of submitting to the main global powers.

Despite its autonomism, Mr. Alfonsín's mandate kept a mature relationship with the United States. The historical context when he was elected facilitated a relaxed atmosphere with the hegemony. The fresh wounds of Argentina's last dictatorship fostered the defence of democracy and human rights, values which were shared with the United States. Raúl Alfonsín signed and ratified several agreements in this regard, such as the American Convention on Human Rights in 1984.

On the other hand, after 1983, dependency became the predominant attitude in Argentina towards the hegemonic powers, mainly the US. This meant to submit

to and depend from the hegemony; in many cases, in financial and economic terms.

The lacklustre economic outlook of a country burdened with debt forced Argentina to move closer to the United States, Washington D.C. in particular. Unlike Mr. Alfonsín's autonomist and mature relationship with the United States, the following government changed the perspective. Mr. Menem seemed to express his "realistic acceptance of the leadership of the United States" (Simonoff 2010, 11) in his first term (1989 - 1995). He surrendered to the power of the hegemony since it was so real and so undeniable, that confronting it would be utopic. This topic will be dealt in detail in chapter 2.

As explained by Figari, the relationship between two countries that have different level of development can only bring to a relation of dependence:

..”la relación entre países desarrollados-subdesarrollados es una relación mando-obediencia, que no es una relación que nos pueda llevar a practicar una política autonómica, sino de dependencia..” (Figari 1985, 25)

Argentine governments seemed to lack foreign policies, but just a strategy to insert the country into the international context, as if Argentine presidents attempted to find a place into the world for their nation. Studying Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner's foreign policies and their consistency will depict the autonomist and dependent tendencies of each.

Carlos Menem's run to the political scene of Argentina was particularly characterized by the affection and empathy he demonstrated to the population. For citizens, Menem meant a return to the beloved populism, something that certainly worried the financiers. On the economic front, a particular and uncontrollable crisis was unleashed during Mr. Menem's administration: the hyperinflation crisis.

Mr. Menem's political campaign was distinguished by a combination of the traditional Peronist rhetorics, but also by a profound respect for democratic institutions. An example is his way to reform the economy. Perón's Peronism was determined to nationalize the economy. Instead, Mr. Menem's focused mainly in the free market, closer to the North American model. Nevertheless, the Peronist propaganda, the strong presence on media, and all other typical rhetoric resources of Peronism were still present.

Mr. Menem was perceived as the leader that society needed to restore order, close to the population and driven by passion, not just a politician seeking power. Mr. Menem presented a double image: the one of a leader taking tough decisions for the country (such as the convertibility plan), but at the same time, staying close to the population in a peculiar way, which may be seen as bizarre or incongruent.

Néstor Kirchner's presidency starts as well in a hectic situation. First of all, the unstoppable crisis that was sweeping away Argentina in 2001. Although Mr. Kirchner was not such a popular or recognized politician at the beginning, his image changed in a matter of months, obtaining an overwhelming popular support. His initial goal was to change the relation between the state and the population, and giving a new power to the institutions of the state. Just as Mr. Menem, his presidency was characterized by a proximity to the people, but Mr. Kirchner presented a more modest propaganda.

### 1.3 High and low concept in Argentine politics

In the European political context, political parties are commonly classified as left or right. This is because in Western Europe, the political panorama is well-established and traditionally settled in a right-left structure. Unlike in the Old

Continent, Latin America's political context lacks this solid system. Party systems are much recent in comparison, and many of them are the result of failed older parties or of the lack of institutionalization. Under these circumstances, a system of high and low concept results perfect as a method of balance.

Left and right still run the party systems around the world, even in South America. However, Pierre Ostiguy casts some doubt on the traditional structure in his article *The High and the Low in Politics: A Two-Dimensional Political Space for Comparative Analysis and Electoral Studies*. He instead sheds some light on the issue by explaining how the high-low and right-left axes provide a better analysis, creating a two-dimensional space which better represents the political scenario.

Since this thesis explores the field of foreign policy during two Peronist administrations, analysing Latin American populist movements beyond the scope of the traditional political spectrum of left and right may result in a more accurate study of the issue. Political categories 'high' and 'low' may be found more suitable for these cases, filling the gap which the traditional analysis fails to explain.

The position of Peronism in the political spectrum has shifted several times throughout history. At the end of the Second World War, it was considered on the right. From 1960 to 1980, the movement was thought to be on the left. However, in 1990, Peronism was believed right-wing once again, to finally consider incumbent Peronism in the early 90s as a leftist movement (Ostiguy 2009, 2).

Finding the appropriate place of Peronism on the political spectrum may result confusing. Its closeness to the people and the working class would imply that we are dealing with a left-wing movement. However, being based on the social

doctrine of the Catholic Church, maintaining structures and concentrating power as some of its main characteristics do not correspond with the values of the left.

When Mr. Perón won the elections in 1973 for a third administration, he made a clear distinction and broke up with the *Montoneros*, the leftist part of the movement, depicting his adoption of right-wing politics.

All these examples clearly demonstrate how labelling Peronism as either left or right is incomplete. Considering the examples above and prior analysis, Peronism pertains to the left due to its economic policies and social bases, and to the right due to its differences with liberal democracy. Nevertheless, the definition of Peronism is complete and rich with the introduction of the low concept, along with the left-right axis.

The distinction between low and high becomes particularly relevant during the electoral process. In a situation of an undecided or confused electorate, with unknown or unclear political platforms, a candidate with a high or low tendency may result useful. If voters do not identify with a particular political tendency, the left-right scheme is not compliant in order to vote. This is when voters can consider the high-low scheme, which involves more factors of judgment.

The high-low dimension is thus a valuable tool to influence but also to define the political behaviour of the voters. High and low permit voters to recognize their similarities with the candidates by analysing ways of behaving and focusing on the candidate as a person.

The high-low concept is more concrete than the left-right one. It involves the way of relating with people, the way of speaking, the way of dressing and so on. Voters can easily recognize what is morally acceptable for them as the scheme studies the candidate both from its political and personal perspective.



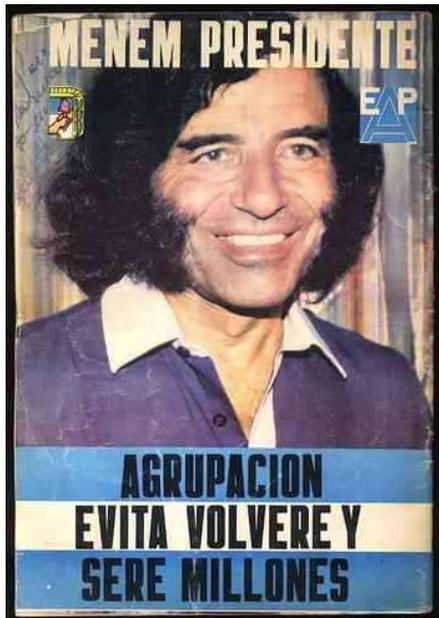
characteristics may be perceived as “cold” and far from the crowds, with a high respect for roles and barely empathic.

The low behaviour, on the other hand, is perceived as more informal, including the way of dressing up and speaking, using slang and metaphors as a way of expression. The people feel closer to them, their way of life, and habits. They are more sympathetic and go beyond the political parties.

A clear example of the differences between ‘high’ and ‘low’ in these terms can be easily identified in Argentine presidential elections in 1989. The two main presidential candidates were Carlos Menem and Eduardo Angeloz.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Menem had huge sideburns and people saw him riding a horse in a colourful poncho. This is the image of a person who is not frightened to place himself at the same level of the voters and sometimes to go beyond the formalisms. On the other hand, Eduardo Angeloz kept a more “respectable” image, always formal and well-dressed, giving therefore the impression of being at the top of the social scale, and even far from most of the population. He represented the typical figure of a politician. As for example Mr. Fernando De la Rúa.

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<sup>10</sup> President of Argentina from 1999 to 2001.



The other aspect of the high-low concept is the political-cultural. This component is more related to the characteristics concerning the political life rather than the personal life. This comprises the way of exercising authority, and political decision-making. In the high level, the authority is more institutionalized and impersonal; instead, politicians in the low level are distinguished by a personalistic leadership.

The key to understand this difference between high and low is to identify the type of authority, whether it be of an impersonal or personal tendency. The low is characterized by a “less talk, more action” behaviour. They do not get lost in complicated and formal speeches but go directly to facts by taking decisive actions. Pragmatism is another essential characteristic of the “low” representatives. They take action, and they justify their informality by looking at the facts.

An example of this was the jingle *Menem lo hizo* (Menem Did It) during his campaign for the 1999 elections. Their lyrics read:

“El puede no haber hecho todo, Pero que hizo mucho nadie puede negarlo. El no hizo todo, pero que hizo mucho por nuestra Argentina nadie puede negarlo.”<sup>11</sup>

The low component is more immediate (as a spot song is). The immediacy is an essential element in terms of establishing relations of trust with the people. Low-level leaders prefer to be close to voters, taking the risk of being considered improper by the international community.

Further to the above, between the two dimensions, intellectuals prefer to locate themselves on the high, as the crowds and less-educated people place themselves on the low, giving more importance to action.

Drawing a distinction is paramount. Low and high do not refer to a social status, but to a political status. Low does not mean the poor versus the rich. It is a political appeal, a way of acting in politics. A politician who adopts a low tendency does not necessarily pertain to the lower class, but his/her policies can most certainly be addressed to a particular social class. It is a political style, not a social status. It is a rival approach to politics.

Candidates place themselves on the low or high dimension, but this does not mean that they belong to this specific dimension. In Argentina, it is quite difficult to see a politician who actually belongs to the crowds.

If the two axes right-left and low-high are integrated, a bidimensional scheme is obtained that combines different political attitudes. This scheme results incredibly useful to explain the political panorama of Latin America.

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<sup>11</sup> Menem Carlos, *Menem lo Hizo*, propaganda spot, 1999.

English: “He may not have done everything, but nobody can deny he did a lot. He did not do everything, but he did a lot for Argentina and nobody can deny that”

As explained above, it is possible for a right-wing politician on the low to belong to the popular sector and be voted by it, as well as a politician on the high-left, as stated on Figure 1.3.

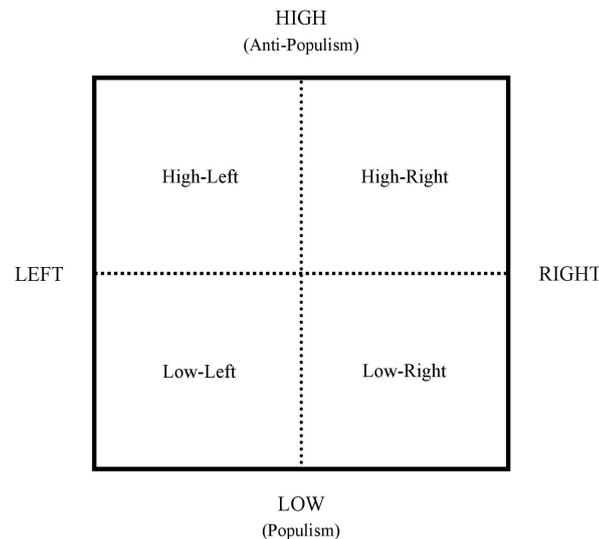


Figure 1.3 “A Two-Dimensional Political Space of Positions and Appeals” (Ostiguy 2009, 17)

The “low” section seems to perfectly define populism. In his article, P. Ostiguy defines the low as the explanation of Peronism, and the high as the definition of anti-Peronism, thus simplifying the Argentine political context (Ostiguy 2009).

Populism seems pertaining to a left wing (low-left) tendency, since one of its missions is to redistribute income within the population. However, in terms of leadership, it seems to hold a right-wing tendency (low-right). Nobody can forget the plebiscitary public appearance of Perón during his mandate, an authoritarian-like behaviour which certainly pertains to the right-wing rather than to the left-wing.

The existence of the low axis is what exactly permits the differentiation between left and right in Peronism. It is thus incorrect to define populism just as right or left, not because there is no right or left inside populism, but precisely because both do exist, and a more specific definition is needed. The “low” concept provides the answer that the right-left axis fails to do.

Left and right in the context of Argentina are essential, but not sufficient. Furthermore, populism takes its definition from the “low,” where a strong leader is needed and where the nearness with the population is fundamental.

“Peronism overtime is best described as politically on the low and anti-Peronism has presented itself as being politically on the high” (Ostiguy 2009).

As an example, when Mr. Perón returned to Argentina after the military regimes, he was mostly approaching the right and he was indeed succeeded by the right wing of Peronism: Carlos Menem. At the same time, he was succeeded by the Peronist left wing: Néstor Kirchner. Based on their policies, we can place Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner on the low-right and on the low-left of Peronism, respectively.

A low-left foreign policy can be identified as a more “autonomist” foreign policy. More nationalist and not completely submitted to the huge powers around the world as the United States. This is precisely the case of Néstor Kirchner’s foreign policy. On the other hand, Carlos Menem’s foreign policy could be placed on the low-right, since his principles were more in favour of an alignment with the United States. The main point to take into account is the importance that the two governments gave to the relationship with Latin America, looking for a regional integration and the relationship with other countries as the Unites States.

During Mr. Menem’s mandate, the privileged partner was the United States, instead of Brazil for example, which merely consisted of a commercial

relationship.<sup>12</sup> Due to his tight links with the United States, President Menem proceeded in some acts without asking for consensus with other Latin American countries. An example was when he sent troops to fight during the Gulf War<sup>13</sup> without informing Brazil.

On the other hand, the relationship between Argentina and Brazil during Néstor Kirchner's mandate was deeply developed. President Kirchner privileged the relationship with Brazil, whereas his links with United States were purely strategic and with economic purposes.

In conclusion, we have seen how the low-high theory enriches the definition of politics around the world, and it results highly precise in Latin American politics. However, it is important to say that Osteguy authored this article in 1997, before Kirchnerism. This is a fact to keep in mind since Kirchnerism transformed the political scene in Argentina in terms of left-right, but also in terms of Kirchnerism-Peronism.

This first chapter highlighted the role of Argentina at the international level as an agro exporter and the attempts of each President in office to manage this role according to his tendency, whether more autonomous or more dependent from other countries, mainly the United States. By using Ostiguy's article as reference, Peronism has been defined as pertaining to the low section of Ostiguy's scheme, differentiating Menem and Kirchner's policies in terms of low-left and low-right. This definition has resulted highly precise in Latin American politics.

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<sup>12</sup> They start the arrangement in order to create the regional integration: Mercosur

<sup>13</sup> 1990-1991, The Golfo war between Iraq and the 35 countries driven by the United States

## 2. Analysis of Menem's foreign policy – The Neoliberalism in Argentina

This chapter explores the impact of Carlos Menem's neoliberal policies, the theory of peripheral realism and the consequent role of Argentina at the international level. Other phenomena of Mr. Menem's administration will also be our subject of study, as the process of democracy consolidation after the previous dictatorship and the internal crisis of Argentina which affected his foreign policy. The measures he took to face de crisis, as the convertibility plan, were the characteristic point of his policies and the reason for further agreements as Mercosur. This chapter will explore his attempt to enhance and facilitate trade with neighbouring countries through MERCOSUR (Mercado Común del Sur) in 1995, the Southern Common Market, and purposes for these agreements during Mr. Menem presidency.

### 2.1 Political Context – the Change

The analysis will now centre in the policies implemented by Carlos Saúl Menem during his presidential mandate, including foreign policies, pursued a “change” in the system of the country. These changes had their repercussion in many aspects of the Argentine political context, so was the case of their foreign affairs. This subchapter will set out the changes in foreign policy during Mr. Menem's administration, going into the process of democracy consolidation after the previous dictatorship and President Alfonsín's administration. Finally, the analysis will focus on how the internal crisis of Argentina affected its foreign policy.

Changes were produced in the core values of Peronism as well. During the elections, Carlos Menem had elevated those values, but were not respected later on. Therefore, after the elections, Peronists no longer felt represented by a president who did not seem to embody the “Peronist mission.” President Menem took pragmatic measures to change the political system and the economy of Argentina, as shall be seen later.

The change of political regime was determinant for a change in foreign policy. Carlos Menem took office only 5 years after the dictatorship, hence Argentina was still in the process of enforcing its democracy. In democracy, foreign policy should respect the interests of the population and respect the democratic values at the same time. In 1989, Argentina was still affected by the past foreign policy of the dictators who nearly shut the door to the world, even to neighbouring countries (Bernal-Meza, Raúl. 2002). A change was needed to find a new place for the country in the international context.

There were also some other factors that brought change to foreign policy during President Menem’s mandate, which can be clearly classified as internal and external factors. The external factors are the “systemic” ones, those present in the international context and therefore out of the national system.

For example, the transforming wave of globalization in the 90s was an external factor. The world started to be more connected, mostly in commercial terms, and neoliberalism arose as a new political tendency, which perfectly matched with globalization. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the communist model fell as well. The Cold War was not in the picture anymore, and developing countries became interested in a new international order focused on neoliberal politics rather than communism. These countries started to opt for a smaller role of the government, leaving the responsibility of driving growth to international organizations (Russel 1993, in Bernal-Meza, Raúl 2002). This was what precisely led to the wide dissemination of globalization.

Internal factors, on the other hand, are directly connected to domestic affairs. The instability of domestic politics has always affected Argentine foreign policy. In the case of Mr. Menem, his foreign policy was mostly disturbed by economic weakness rather than political. The profound economic crisis and the unpleasant outlook when Carlos Menem took office permitted him to control the situation as he pleased. The population longed a saviour able to overturn the crisis.

Mr. Menem took office on 8 July December 1989. In June of the same year, the country had faced a 197% inflation rate (Rodriguez 1995, 4). Argentina found itself in a hyperinflation crisis, which was the reason why preceding president Raúl Alfonsín had ended his term earlier than expected, lacking any sort of popular support.

Carlos Menem's presidential inauguration speech left his pursuit of change clear:

“El pueblo argentino votó por la epopeya de la unidad nacional. Por eso, nuestro gobierno es un gobierno de la unidad nacional. Se murió, gracias a Dios, el país donde impera la ley de la selva. Se acabó el país oficial y el país sumergido. Se acabó el país visible y el país real. Yo vengo a mirar a esas dos Argentinas. Vengo a luchar por el reencuentro de esas dos

patrias. Yo no aspiro a ser el presidente de una facción, de un grupo, de un sector, de una expresión política. No deseo ser el presidente de una nueva frustración. Yo deseo ser el presidente de una Argentina unida, que avance a pesar de las discrepancias. Yo les aseguro que, a partir de este instante, la Argentina inicia la independencia de la retórica, de inmovilismo, de la insensatez. Vamos a hablar con los hechos, y no tan sólo con los discursos. Se terminó definitivamente el país del ‘todos contra todos’. Comienza el país del ‘todos junto a todos’. Una voz que hoy se alza como una oración, como un

ruego, como un grito conmovedor. Argentina, levántate y anda.”<sup>14</sup> (Pavon 1989, 299-300)

He clearly wanted to mark a real change. Two phrases of this speech seem illuminating. “No deseo ser el presidente de una nueva frustracion”<sup>15</sup> shows he was aware of the situation of the country, perhaps also of the conservative policies of the past, and stemming from this awareness, he wanted to accomplish something different with evident results. Secondly, “We are going to speak with facts” depicts a distinct pragmatism. Pragmatic changes in the political and economic system will be subject of further analysis.

As previously indicated, Menem had more possibilities to drive the situation since the crisis was so severe that any action could adjust it. In that respect, he was able to change the political tendency of the country and to establish a neoliberal programme.

Since Menem belonged to the Peronist movemnet, it is worth considering that one of Peronism’s goal was to be economically independent, and one of the measures to reach this goal had been the ISI programme (Import Substitution Industrialization), implemented by Juan Domingo Perón in 1946 with the goal of developing the domestic market, promoting exports over imports. Menem did not promote the ISI programme, as he wanted to drastically open Argentina’s

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<sup>14</sup> English: The Argentine people voted for the epic of national unity. Thus, our government is a national unity government. Thank God, the law of the jungle does not rule the country anymore. This is the end of the official country and the sunk country. This is the end of the visible and the real country. I am here to look at the two Argentinas. I am here to fight for the reunion of these two nations. I do not wish to be the president of a fraction, of a group, of a sector, of a political expression. I do not wish to be the president of a new frustration. I wish to be the president of a united Argentina, a country that moves forward despite discrepancies. And I assure you that, from now on, Argentina starts the independency of rhetoric, of immobility, of senselessness. We are going to speak with facts, and not just with speeches. This is the definitive end of the country of everyone against each other. This is the start of the country of everyone with each other. Today, a voice rises as a prayer, as a plea, as a moving cry. Argentina, rise up and walk

<sup>15</sup> English: I do not wish to be the president of a new frustration

economy to the world and to be aligned with the Western countries rather than being independent, even if that meant submission. Menem was keen on privatizations and rejected the development of public services and social aid.

International prices were much more competitive than the internal market. As in all liberal economies, this meant an extreme weakening of the national industry, making it impossible to be competitive with the international products. Although the international market lured external investments in Argentina, it destroyed the national workforce and the internal market.

This tendency made President Menem break away with Peronist values that had driven his political campaign. This change in terms of “political orientation” also characterized his foreign policy, since Peronist *independencia económica* was not his priority anymore. After the elections, Peronists stopped feeling represented by the president.

Mr. Menem’s political actions made Peronists feel apart from the political scene. The movement did not seem to be driven by social justice and corporatism anymore; now, the main value was economic development at all costs. Some argue that Menemism represented the end of Perón’s Peronism. The severe crisis that Argentina was facing made the people think that the state was not able to control the situation, making Menem’s neoliberal policies such as privatizations more popular.

Carlos Saúl Menem ran his electoral campaign as a Peronist anyway. In fact, in the run-up to the elections, he was the worst nightmare for entrepreneurs since he represented the return of populism and investments on social aid. But this was only during the elections, as the mandate was ultimately run by drastically different values and policies.

The concept of change can also be seen in a more pragmatic way, considering the actions of change that Menem took. The crisis made the President feel

legitimate to adopt new reforms and laws at the economic and political level. Within the economic sphere, the Reform of the State Act was passed on 18 August 1989, the Economic Emergency Act on 15 September 1989 and the Convertibility Plan in February 1991. As part of the political changes, the most relevant was the Amendment to the Constitution of 1853-1860. These reforms and laws were part of a plan to restore the Argentine economy. Though the theoretical aspects of these reforms are beyond the scope of this thesis, the analysis will focus instead on their effects. (De Simone 2004)

Declaring the economic emergency was key so the population could accept all these changes. This was the exact reason why the Argentine Republic took a closer stance to the United States of America. The Convertibility Plan implemented by Mr. Menem consisted of fixing the exchange rate of 1 US dollar equal to 10,000 australes (1 Argentine peso). This was to avoid the monetary issue to cover the fiscal debt. In order to make this plan work and maintain the parity set, it was necessary to have capital (in dollars) entering Argentina. Due to the crisis, the only way to guarantee dollars entering the country was to implement the privatization process, and this was precisely what Mr. Menem did. (De Simone 2004)

To understand such a massive change in the economic system of Argentina during Mr. Menem's mandate, it is necessary to explain the difference between the "state mission" and the "market mission." The goal of the state is to reach the welfare of citizens, with no pursuit of profit. The state distributes services as follows: healthcare, education, security, and so on, to the population in order to substantially meet their needs without taking into account any economic benefit in return. The main goal of the private sector is the economic benefit.

The point of view of the market, and therefore of the private sector, is completely different. Any social action coming from the private sector would

only take place if any profit is involved. This explains the role of the state: the public sector does what the private cannot afford. <sup>16</sup>

The public sector is a system that, if efficient, should be self-financed through taxes. It is a circular system: citizens pay taxes in exchange of services which are precisely financed by those taxes. In Argentina, the public sector was always in financial deficit and therefore this very system did not seem applicable.

In view of this, the developing countries with fiscal deficit, as Argentina, started to privatize in 1990 in exchange of external investments and hence face the crisis. <sup>17</sup> But the problem was that this privatization started too fast and with no clear plan, as explained by Mabel T.R.

“La ola inicial de privatizaciones se realizó con un ritmo sumamente acelerado, sin cumplir las recomendaciones habituales para este tipo de proceso.”\* (...) La falta de gradualismo en la desestatización no permitió la valoración de las empresas saneándolas previamente, ni la garantía de un mercado abierto y competitivo a posteriori de la privatización, ni tampoco la reserva por parte del Estado de una parte de las acciones en sus manos para mantener algún control sobre el mercado en cuestión o para aprovechar la valorización futura de las mismas. La necesidad política de vender rápidamente y ratificar la voluntad de mantener el rumbo trazado, repercurió negativamente en la negociación con los interesados en la compra.”<sup>18</sup> (Thwaites Rey 1993, 14)

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<sup>16</sup> International Political Economy

<sup>17</sup> The privatizations generated an income of direct capital of 24.445 millions of dollars between 1990 and 1999

<sup>18</sup> English: The initial wave of privatizations was conducted at an extremely accelerated pace, without following the usual recommendations in this type of process.(...) The lack of gradualism in the denationalization process did not permit the appreciation of companies, rationalizing them in advance. This neither permitted the guarantee of a free and competitive market with hindsight to privatization. The public reserve of part of the stocks failed to keep some control of the market or to obtain benefit from their eventual appreciation. The political need for selling rapidly and ratifying its will of keeping on the same path affected the negotiation with the interested parties in the purchase

Such a fast privatization process prevented the formation of social organizations that could have threatened it. In conjunction with the social dissatisfaction towards the crisis, President Menem continued with his plan.

As analysed so far, his presidency focused in two main points: the reform of the economy and the form of the government. The first point was to solve the hyperinflation through the Convertibility Plan. The second point was achieved through privatizations, which were connected at the same time with the Convertibility Plan that maintained the Argentine peso and the American dollar at equal rates.

When the state is no more capable of fulfilling their citizens needs, the private sector came into play and changed the system. It is clear how this programme was far away from Peron's achievements in terms of the public sector.

Therefore, all these changes that Menem introduced seemed not to be retroactive or to solve the issues of Argentina with a state in continuous crisis. Actually, Menem placed Argentina into the international context, but the crisis of 2001 confirmed that the problems hadn't been completely solved yet.

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## 2.2 Carlos Menem's Foreign Policy: Peripheral Realism and the Relationship with the United States

Mr. Menem's policies brought many changes to Argentina. This had a substantial impact on his foreign policy, shifting the orientation adopted by previous administrations. Foreign policy was driven by the so called "peripheral realism."<sup>19</sup>

"Peripheral realism" is a way to manage foreign policies by states that are "peripheral," vulnerable, less strategic and that, due to this weakness, try to avoid any conflict that would entail major expenditure, which always turn out to be hard to meet by the underdeveloped countries (De Simone 2014). It was named as such for the first time by C. Escudè in 1989 but was already present in the international context before the term was coined.

Considering the context where "peripheral realism" took place in Argentina is key to understand this theory. (Escudé 2012)  
In Argentina, it emerged at the end of the Cold War, when the world was starting to know globalization with its various waves and influences.

Thus, in 1989, two main parties ruled the Argentine political scenario: The Radical Civic Union, popularly known as UCR in Spanish, and the Justicialist Party or PJ.<sup>20</sup> Despite their drastically different views on politics, they agreed that Argentina was weak at the international level and needed to find its new

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<sup>19</sup> "Peripheral" refers to a State that is not standing part of the Security Council of United Nations nor a big economic power as Germany or Japan (Escudè 2012). The phrase "peripheral realism," in reference to a doctrine of foreign policy used for the first time in literature by C. Escudè, "De la irrelevancia de Reagan y Alfonsín: Hacia el Desarrollo de un Realismo Periferico", R. Bouzas y R. Russel (ed.), Estados Unidos y la Transición Argentina, Buenos Aires: Lasagna, 1989.

<sup>20</sup> 1964, the party that belongs to the Peronist movement.

place. Peripheral realism theory explained that undeveloped and weak countries needed to implement a foreign policy based on its citizens to obtain real and pragmatic outcomes (Escudé 2012). According to C. Escudé's peripheral realism, these policies required a realistic approach, considering all the factors influencing daily life, including the external.

Menem's foreign policy and peripheral realism correlated in the sense that this theory served as the path towards achieving his goal. This goal was to reach the "first world" and place Argentina side by side with the big powers. At the beginning, it did not seem dependency, but just cooperation in order to reach the top.

As per Escudé's definition, "peripheral realism" in Argentina meant the following in terms of foreign relations:

1. *Alineamiento explícito con Occidente, abandonando el Movimiento de Países No Alineados y redefiniendo el perfil de votos argentinos en foros internacionales;*
2. *Restablecimiento de relaciones cooperativas con el Reino Unido;*
3. *Ratificación del Tratado de Tlatelolco para la Prohibición de armas nucleares en América latina y adhesión al Tratado de No Proliferación Nuclear, y*
4. *Desactivación del proyecto de misil balístico Cóndor II y de la sociedad con*  
<sup>21</sup>  
*Saddam Hussein.*

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<sup>21</sup> English: 1. Explicit alignment with the West, abandoning the Non-Aligned Movement and redefining the profile of the Argentine vote at international fora;  
2. Restablishing the cooperating relations with the United Kingdom;  
3. Ratification of the Treaty of Tlatelolco for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and adherence to the Treaty of Non-Nuclear Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and  
4. Deactivation of the ballistic missile Cóndor II and the society with Saddam Hussein.  
(Escudé, 2012)

(Escudé 2012)

To understand above measures of foreign policy put in place by Carlos Menem, understanding his personality is required. With his intuitive manner of ruling the country, he longed to place Argentina close to the Western World and find its place into the international context. For attaining such purpose, he had identified the reason of the distance between Argentina and the first world. Argentine diplomacy required a pragmatic, realistic and active approach (Escudé 2012). He maintained that the past diplomatic style needed a change to adopt practical policies, as he explained:

<sup>22</sup>“Venimos de una diplomacia abstracta [...] Tuvimos una larga tradición diplomática que, aunque alentada por buenas intenciones o por posturas moralistas, estuvo siempre condenada al fracaso por carecer de la causa primordial de todo éxito político, que es un ajuste con la realidad”. (Cavallo 1996, 360)

Mr. Menem’s officers criticized the previously “*política de prestigio*” (Cisneros 1996, 16) as the reason for underdevelopment. They criticized the traditional Argentine diplomacy, the practical aspects of it that seemed far from their new pragmatism. Argentina needed a present role in the international context and stable relationships with the rest of the world.

Some examples of the above-mentioned pragmatic diplomacy are the restructuring of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the creation of “Fundación Export.ar” and of six Argentina’s promotion centres in Frankfurt, San Paulo, Barcelona, Los Angeles, New York, Milan (Stuhldreher 2003, 92), and so on.

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<sup>22</sup> English: “We come from an abstract diplomacy. (...) We had a long diplomatic tradition that, though encouraged by good intentions or by moralistic positions, was always doomed to failure because it lacked the primordial cause of all political success, that is an adjustment to reality.”

Menem created an international network that differentiated his policy from the previous one.

The distance of Argentina from the rest of the world at the beginning of Menem's mandate was clearly still due to the recent dictatorship that had broken off many international relations. This was the moment to put an end to the isolation. A considerable importance was given to the relationship with Western Europe, in particular with the United Kingdom. In 1990, diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom were re-established for the first time after the Malvina's War. According to Menem, it was precisely the state-centrism what had led to the Malvina's War. The state management had to leave space to neoliberalism and to the international organizations.

An agreement was signed with the EEC (European Economic Community) in 1990 aimed at establishing commercial relationships. All these new (or renewed) relationships made clear Menem's purpose to get closer to the ancient allies and partner countries and thus restore the ancient cooperation.

This purpose was part of the peripheral realism theory. Realism considers that reality has its own life and can be used as an instrument of social order. The reality was that at that time the hegemonic power was the United States, therefore Argentina had to accept the power of the hegemony and be at its side, not fight against it.

<sup>23</sup>“Alineamiento con los EE. UU., entendido en términos de aceptación realista del liderazgo norteamericano en el hemisferio occidental.” (Escudè 1997, 394)

An aspect that was determinant to accept the sovereignty of the United States was the common belief that democracy was the direct consequence of economic

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<sup>23</sup>Eng. “The alignment with the US, in terms of realistic acceptance of the North American leadership in the western hemisphere.”

stability. Thus, to restore the democracy lost with the dictatorship, Argentina needed to settle its economic situation, finding a partner to do so.

<sup>24</sup>“El realismo es por antonomasia la política exterior de un estado comercial. Un estado que pone énfasis en la especialización económica a partir de sus ventajas comparativas, lo cual significa, para el estado argentino, la profundización del modelo agroexportador”. (Fermendois 1995)

In a period when the wound of the dictatorship was still bleeding, every option to restore democracy was accepted to enforce the economy. The point is that the economic stability was not reachable without external investments. The United States was the precise commercial and financial partner that Argentina needed at that time. Not only did the United States give economic support, but also political. In fact, the US supported Argentina to be part of the Brady Plan.<sup>25</sup> The United States became the main economic and political partner of Argentina during Carlos Menem’ mandate. How this alliance turned into a dependence relationship rather than a peer and mutual relationship will be studied in detail later on.

The United States as “winner” of the Cold War had a huge power that permitted them to export their policies and influence countries as Argentina with neoliberalism. Neoliberalism had been promoted by the so called “Washington consensus.”<sup>26</sup> This set of economic policy prescriptions promoted the liberalization of trade and the privatization of the state-run enterprise, precisely what President Menem did during his mandate.

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<sup>24</sup> “Realism is par excellence the foreign policy of a commercial state. A state that emphasizes economic specialization based on its comparative advantages, which for the Argentine government means the deepening of the agro-export model.”

<sup>25</sup> Strategy for the developing countries to restructure their debt with the United States.

<sup>26</sup> 1989, The economist John Williamson named “Washington Consensus” a plan of 10 policies aimed at the developing countries that were suffering from crises.

Guido Di Tella<sup>27</sup> notes that Argentina needed to achieve all its goals of revival with a strong relation with the United States, as he clearly explained with this declaration:

<sup>28</sup>“Nosotros queremos un amor carnal con Estados Unidos, nos interesa porque podemos sacar algún beneficio.” (Di Tella 1990)

This “*amor carnal*” provides a better idea of what kind of relationship Argentina was seeking. As a member of the Justicialist Party, President Menem was unavoidably heavily criticised. Peronists had always been commercial partners with the United States, but they were surely not looking for a “carnal love” relationship, as “economic independence” was one of their key values. In fact, Peronists looked for internal investments rather than external.

Due to the above-mentioned kind of “historical hostility” between Peronists and the United States, Menem needed to give a strong sign of change to establish a new relationship of partnership with the hegemonic power.

One of this “strong sign” is for example the fact that he sent Argentine troops<sup>29</sup> to the Gulf War without considering the opinion of the other South American countries and without waiting for the parliamentary consensus, going against the Constitution.

Another example is the Condor II issue. During his electoral campaign, Menem pledged to keep alive and develop the Condor II project as a strategy to develop defence. Despite these promises, in 1991 Menem kneeled before the United States’ pressure and ordered the dismantling of Condor II. (Escudè 2012)

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<sup>27</sup> 1991 - 1999, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Argentina.

<sup>28</sup> Eng. “We want carnal love with the United States, we are interested in obtaining some benefit.”

<sup>29</sup> 17 September 1990.

The same attitude was used when Argentina sold arms to Ecuador and Croatia during the two wars.<sup>30</sup> Doing above acts, Argentina went against its principles of peace but even against international organizations such as the UN that in 1991 had established an embargo for the countries of former Yugoslavia facing the war. The most peculiar fact is that at the same time 800 Argentine blue helmets were present in those territories to guarantee peace. In both facts, the presence of the United States is a clear influence for Argentina's actions since the arms for the Ecuador-Peru war came from a North American factory and in the second case due to the quantity of the arms that cannot belong just to Argentina (Santoro 1998).

The closeness to the United States seemed a desperate attitude at all costs, forgetting all the Peronist principles. It gave the impression that everything was valid to achieve economic development. Can Mr. Menem be criticised for such decisions?

If we think of the economic crisis, the isolation, and the debt he found in the country when he took office, his subsequent decisions can be considered reasonable, as they were aimed at sorting a severe situation. But it is also important to remember his electoral campaign and the values of the party he belonged to.

Even Juan Domingo Perón had held a relationship with the United States, However, due to his convertibility plan, Carlos Menem not only did he have relations with the US, but made his Government s depend from the American capital. Instead, Carlos Menem first wanted to stop having a confrontational relationship with the US and then established a strong economic relationship through the convertibility plan, which created a strong dependence.

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<sup>30</sup> War between Ecuador and Peru.

Some say that Peronism died with Menem, clearing the path for Menemism, a hybrid movement with strong Peronist components. Despite this apparent new movement created by him, which will be subject of further analysis, it is worth considering that he did not commit to his pledges during the campaign. His main goal during his administration was clearly finding a new place for Argentina in the international context by submitting to the power of the US.

The submission issue, or “strong affiliation,” is not something new in Argentina. In fact, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Argentina held a solid relationship with Great Britain. This memory kept the government’s belief that cooperation with a hegemony is the key to be present in the international context.

<sup>31</sup>“La creencia largamente difundida en el gobierno (y en vastos sectores sociales del país) de que la inserción exitosa de Argentina en el mundo a fines del siglo XIX y principios de XX se hizo de la mano de una relación preferente con Gran Bretaña y siguiendo un modelo de política exterior que se ajustó conforme a las circunstancias de la época, a lo que hoy llamamos un estado comerciante.” (Russel 1995, 556-558)

The agro-export model of Argentina seems to have always required a partner country to invest in the Argentine economy. We must remember that the attempt of Juan Domingo Perón to make Argentina economically independent through the ISI plan was a failure. But in any case, is that a sufficient reason to justify a complete dependence from a country? Is it the only way to restore the Argentine economy? Since Menem created an economic system that was completely based

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<sup>31</sup> Eng. “The long-held belief in the government (and in many social sectors of the country) that Argentina’s successful insertion in the world at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was done through a preferential relationship with Great Britain and following a foreign policy model that was adjusted according to the circumstances of the time, what we today call a commercial state.”

on the dependency from the American dollar, the answer to the above question seems affirmative.

### 2.3 Mercosur and the Relationship with South American Countries

As explained in preceding pages, the convertibility plan was an economic policy established by President Carlos Menem in 1991 to face the economic crisis and in an attempt to enter Argentina into the so called “first world.”<sup>32</sup>

The convertibility plan placed Argentina in a position of dependence from inward investments and import of the American currency. The objective was to establish a one-to-one parity between the Argentine Peso and the American Dollar aimed at attracting dollars from foreign trade.

In order to improve and facilitate trade with neighbouring countries, Argentina signed the Treaty of Asunción in 1991 and established MERCOSUR (*Mercado Común del Sur*), the Southern Common Market.

Mercosur is a trade bloc which has brought several advantages to Argentina and other member countries. However, before going into detail, the context where it took place must be understood to have a better comprehension of the nature of this bloc.

Mercosur was founded in a neoliberal period in the region. In fact, the four presidents who signed the treaty in 1991 were Carlos Saúl Menem from

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<sup>32</sup> The industrialized capitalist countries as Western Europe and North America.

Argentina, Fernando Affonso Collor de Mello from Brazil, Andrés Rodríguez Pedotti from Paraguay, and Luis Alberto Lacalle from Uruguay.

Neoliberalism, focused on the free market, influenced the objectives of the agreement aimed at creating a free trade area between its member countries. Looking at the text of the Asunción Treaty (*Tratado de Asunción*) - Figure 2.1 - will provide a better understanding of its main goal:

TRATADO DE ASUNCION  
CAPITULO I  
PROPOSITOS, PRINCIPIOS E INSTRUMENTOS  
Artículo 1  
Los Estados Partes deciden constituir un Mercado Común, que deber estar conformado al 31 de diciembre de 1994, el que se denominará "Mercado Común del Sur" ([MERCOSUR](#)).  
Este Mercado Común implica  
- La libre circulación de bienes, servicios y factores productivos entre los países, a través, entre otros, de la eliminación de los derechos aduaneros y restricciones no arancelarias a la circulación de mercaderías y de cualquier otra medida equivalente;

Figure 2.1 (Assumption traty Cap.I 1991)

Its first article mentioned the “*libre circulación de bienes, servicios y factores productivos.*” It means the free movement of goods, services, and productive factors for trade purposes, not the movement of people. The economic purpose of this integration is clear. Mercosur was a neoliberal project to develop the economy but always based, for the Argentina case, on the deep relationship with the United States and its currency. In fact, Mercosur facilitated commercial exchange in US dollars with countries as Brasil, something fundamental for Argentina in that period to keep up with the Convertibility plan. This idea will be further explored in upcoming pages.

As already mentioned, the purpose of Mercosur was to create a free trade area between the countries that signed the agreement. The economic aspects did not leave much space to social aspects, which were later considered by subsequent administrations.

Brazil was the main power with which Argentina was interested in holding an economic relationship, due to the similar economic aspects between the two.

Argentina stopped the confrontational relation with Brazil to clear the way for economic integration.

One of the stages to establish Mercosur is precisely the integration between Argentina and Brazil (1986-1990), starting a bilateral commercial integration.

Two declarations mainly characterized this integration:

-The Foç do Iguaçu Declaration (1985)<sup>33</sup>

-The Act of Buenos Aires (1990)<sup>34</sup>

These two actions placed the basis for the creation of Mercosur. In particular, the Foç do Iguaçu declaration was established in a peculiar historical period for both economies. Argentina and Brazil were coming out from the dictatorship and had the need for transforming their economies to achieve an economic order. With this purpose in common, Argentina and Brazil started their integration.

The Act of Buenos Aires was the direct consequence of the integration started in 1985. Its purpose was “La necesidad de modernización de las economías de los dos países, de ampliar la oferta y calidad de los bienes en circulación en los dos mercados y de favorecer el desarrollo económico con Justicia Social.”<sup>35</sup> It basically

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<sup>33</sup> It was an agreement for integration signed on 30 November 1985 in Foz de iguazu (Brasil) by Argentina president Raul Alfonsin and Brasil President Josè Sarney. The agreement placed the bases for Mercosur.

<sup>34</sup> ..El señor Presidente de la Republica Argentina Dr. Carlos Saul Menem y el Señor Presidente de la Republica federativa del Brasil Dr. Fernando Collor ...Deciden.. Establecer un MERCADO COMUN entre la Republica Argentina y la Republica Federativa del Brasil, el que deberá encontrarse definitivamente conformado el 31 de diciembre de 1994... (Acta de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, 6 July 1990)

<sup>35</sup> Acta de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires 6 July 1990. Eng: “The need for modernization of the two countries’ economies, for increasing the supply and the quality of goods in circulation in the two markets, and for the economic development with Social Justice.”

followed and developed the integration process previously started in 1991 that led to the creation of MERCOSUR.

The integration assumed the abolition of those policies that created different economic treatments between the countries involved. This integration between Argentina and Brazil seems to be based on the economic aspects that Argentina was interested to achieve rather than cooperation between similar countries with a common purpose of development. Argentina could implement the export all over the world as long as dollars came into the country, but it was precisely the wish to introduce some trade facilitations what led Argentina to create an agreement with a country as Brazil.

At the first stages, when the integration was just with Brazil, the result was the increase of their bilateral trade and of intra-industry trade. Both had already signed bilateral agreements with Uruguay and Paraguay, leaving the door open to expanding the integration project to them.

Therefore, MERCOSUR facilitated and developed trade between integrated countries through the implementation of the following actions:

- Creation of a free trade area
- Common external tariff
- Macroeconomic policy coordination
- Sectoral agreements

Below abstract (Figure 2.2) for *Chapter 1, article 1* from the “*Mercosur free trade agreement*”, 1991 explains above points:

This common market shall involve:

The free movement of goods, services and factors of production between countries through, inter alia, the elimination of customs duties and non-tariff restrictions on the movement of goods, and any other equivalent measures;

The establishment of a common external tariff and the adoption of a common trade policy in relation to third States or groups of States, and the co-ordination of positions in regional and international economic and commercial forums;

The co-ordination of macroeconomic and sectoral policies between the States Parties in the areas of foreign trade, agriculture, industry, fiscal and monetary matters, foreign exchange and capital, services, customs, transport and communications and any other areas that may be agreed upon, in order to ensure proper competition between the States Parties;

The commitment by States Parties to harmonize their legislation in the relevant areas in order to strengthen the integration process.

Figure 2.2 (Mercosur free trade agreement Cap. I 1991)

The creation of a common market was clearly functional to facilitate trade and therefore promote the entry of US dollars, something necessary to keep the convertibility plan.

Analysts have always confirmed the importance of Mercosur to increase Argentina's exports. In fact, Mercosur was essential for Argentina to export industrial products which were difficult to place in the other Western countries, and also to increase the export of goods that had a high cost of transport, so that they were easily placed into near countries.

This is the reason why one fourth of the total exports (85%) (Gerchunoff, Maachinea, 1994, 441) were directed to the neighbouring countries. This proves that integration was fundamental to keep in place the convertibility plan but at the same time to permit Argentina to distribute and allocate its goods.

**Exportaciones de bienes – ARGENTINA Principales destinos (países y bloques económicos) (en Millones de dólares FOB)**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>1. Unión Europea</b>	<b>3.890,5</b>	<b>4.465,9</b>	<b>4.562,4</b>	<b>3.989,2</b>	<b>4.585,6</b>	<b>4.712,7</b>
Alemania	605,5	649,9	565,5	495,9	570,5	629,1
Italia	654,5	735,5	721,0	734,7	745,6	688,6
Países Bajos	1.179,6	1.191,0	1.225,0	876,0	1.111,4	1.013,0
España	696,0	696,0	724,0	626,7	824,5	962,0
Otros	754,9	1.193,5	1.326,9	1.255,9	1.333,6	1.420,0
<b>2. NAFTA</b>	<b>2.083,6</b>	<b>2.026,9</b>	<b>2.327,0</b>	<b>2.393,1</b>	<b>2.550,8</b>	<b>3.173,9</b>
EE.UU.	1.737,0	1.801,1	1.974,0	2.011,8	2.057,3	2.653,0
Canadá	72,9	81,4	105,0	208,0	225,9	239,3
México	273,7	144,4	248,0	173,3	267,6	281,6
<b>3. MERCOSUR</b>	<b>4.803,7</b>	<b>6.769,7</b>	<b>7.918,0</b>	<b>8.995,4</b>	<b>9.260,8</b>	<b>7.071,3</b>
<b>4. Perú</b>	<b>288,6</b>	<b>275,7</b>	<b>254,2</b>	<b>300,8</b>	<b>322,9</b>	<b>212,7</b>
<b>5. Chile</b>	<b>998,8</b>	<b>1.471,7</b>	<b>1.765,8</b>	<b>1.776,8</b>	<b>1.696,7</b>	<b>1.868,5</b>
<b>6. Venezuela</b>	<b>211,2</b>	<b>377,7</b>	<b>351,3</b>	<b>279,8</b>	<b>355,0</b>	<b>247,0</b>
<b>7. Japón</b>	<b>445,2</b>	<b>455,5</b>	<b>512,0</b>	<b>556,4</b>	<b>659,8</b>	<b>527,5</b>
<b>8. China</b>	<b>224,7</b>	<b>286,9</b>	<b>607,0</b>	<b>858,6</b>	<b>667,3</b>	<b>507,9</b>
<b>9. Otros</b>	<b>2.892,9</b>	<b>4.833,1</b>	<b>5.513,0</b>	<b>6.653,1</b>	<b>5.757,1</b>	<b>5.011,3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>15.839,2</b>	<b>20.963,1</b>	<b>23.810,7</b>	<b>25.222,6</b>	<b>25.856,0</b>	<b>23.332,8</b>

Fuente: INDEC Informa Noviembre 2002

Figure 2.3<sup>36</sup>

The above table (Figure 2.3) depicts how exports in 1994 were chiefly directed to Mercosur member countries. The combination of the convertibility plan, the Mercosur trade bloc, and the wish to improve the Argentine economy seemed to work properly at the beginning and produce the desired outcomes.

This been said, it is important to argue that the open market in reality did not bring Argentina to specialize its economy and the country never abandoned its agro-export model that implied to keep importing goods rather than just exporting.

Table below (Figure 2.4) shows the origin of Argentina's imports:

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<sup>36</sup> In De Simone 2004

**Importaciones de bienes – ARGENTINA Principales orígenes (países y bloques económicos) (en millones de dólares CIF)**

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<b>1. UNION EUROPEA</b>	<b>6.139,6</b>	<b>6.008,7</b>	<b>6.901,7</b>	<b>8.301,6</b>	<b>8.691,3</b>	<b>7.119,4</b>
Alemania	1.275,0	1.248,0	1.427,3	1.660,8	1.897,1	1.409,4
Italia	1.590,1	1.254,6	1.503,5	1.738,6	1.597,1	1.354,6
Países Bajos	162,7	210,4	223,2	252,8	238,6	252,4
España	769,6	928,4	1.063,6	1.239,1	1.326,0	999,9
Otros	2.342,2	2.367,3	2.684,1	3.410,3	3.632,5	3.103,1
<b>2. NAFTA</b>	<b>4.819,2</b>	<b>4.819,3</b>	<b>5.565,7</b>	<b>7.133,1</b>	<b>7.098,2</b>	<b>5.777,0</b>
EE.UU.	4.372,7	4.170,3	4.749,3	6.105,6	6.103,6	4.996,2
Canadá	179,7	273,2	275,4	427,6	386,4	290,1
México	266,8	375,8	541,0	599,9	608,2	490,7
<b>3. MERCOSUR</b>	<b>4.783,8</b>	<b>4.593,7</b>	<b>5.800,4</b>	<b>7.506,6</b>	<b>7.967,3</b>	<b>6.298,8</b>
4. Perú	24,3	33,9	37,0	49,9	522,4	28,8
<b>5. Chile</b>	<b>541,1</b>	<b>512,0</b>	<b>559,4</b>	<b>681,2</b>	<b>709,5</b>	<b>638,5</b>
<b>6. Venezuela</b>	<b>42,4</b>	<b>46,3</b>	<b>111,8</b>	<b>62,8</b>	<b>59,6</b>	<b>79,3</b>
<b>7. Japon</b>	<b>986,3</b>	<b>708,2</b>	<b>725,3</b>	<b>1.121,2</b>	<b>1.442,1</b>	<b>1.068,3</b>
<b>8. China</b>	<b>728,8</b>	<b>607,0</b>	<b>697,9</b>	<b>1.007,0</b>	<b>1.156,6</b>	<b>992,1</b>
<b>9. Otros</b>	<b>3.524,8</b>	<b>2.792,6</b>	<b>3.332,6</b>	<b>4.460,4</b>	<b>3.790,0</b>	<b>3.505,9</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>21.590,3</b>	<b>20.121,7</b>	<b>23.731,8</b>	<b>30.323,8</b>	<b>31.437,0</b>	<b>25.508,1</b>

Fuente : INDEC INFORMA (Septiembre 2001)

Figure 2.4<sup>37</sup>

The European Union is clearly the biggest importer to Argentina. The protectionism of the old countries dwindled the entry of capital coming from Argentine exports (De Simone, 2004).

Due to this protectionism and lack of the economic specialization, Argentina kept exporting mainly raw material without added value. This made Argentina dependent from the international demand.

The result is that even if Argentina increased its exports with the Mercosur member countries, the country would never stop to be dependent from the imports, resulting in a negative balance of trade, as stated on the table below (Figure 2.5):

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<sup>37</sup> in De Simone 2004

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	Acumulado
<b>Exportaciones</b>	15.839,2	20.963,1	23.810,7	25.222,6	25.856,0	23.332,8	<b>135.024,4</b>
<b>Importaciones</b>	21.590,3	20.121,7	23.731,8	30.323,8	31.437,0	25.508,1	<b>152.712,7</b>
<b>Totales</b>	<b>-5751,1</b>	<b>841,4</b>	<b>78,9</b>	<b>-5101,2</b>	<b>-5581</b>	<b>-2175,3</b>	<b>-17688,3</b>

Figure 2.5 (Elaboración de datos del INDEC, 2001-2002)

Another important element connected with proving the legitimacy of the convertibility plan was the necessity to attract external investments. In order to do so, Argentina should be economically reliable at the eyes of the whole world, either neighbouring or overseas. In the case of Brazil, Argentina attained this reliability by giving an end to confrontative relationships and clearing the way for cooperation. At the same time, to find its place in the first world, President Menem had to establish (or re-establish) diplomatic relations with the big economies of the world.

The convertibility plan was clearly the reason for the integration, but the “internal organization” as well. Its purpose was to show credibility to the world and thus end with the international isolation.

The analysis of the convertibility plan in relation with Mercosur and the economic relations of Argentina with the rest of the world explains how the attempt to place Argentina in the first world by implementing policies of change and development, as the convertibility plan, did not really change the international position of Argentina. Its model based on the agro-export is so deep-rooted that even a strong plan on convertibility in conjunction with the integration with neighbouring countries could not change it.

Furthermore, the inclusion to the international economy cannot be considered useful for economic growth if it is not implemented in coordination with a real plan of development, both economic and social. To attain this inclusion, it is necessary to first have a plan of development in domestic terms. Only countries under similar conditions can implement an equal integration plan. This had

something in common with former President Frondizi's plan of developmentalism in 1963. Mr. Frondizi, just as Mr. Menem, accepted the leadership of the United States, but first worked in the development of Argentina.

This chapter has highlighted how the crisis that Mr. Menem met at the beginning of his mandate influenced his foreign policies, mainly in terms of his relationship with the United States. By using C. Escudè's theory of peripheral realism, this chapter explained the reasons that brought to the so called "amor carnal" with the hegemony. The policies implemented by Carlos Menem, like the convertibility plan, fixed the dependent condition of Argentina, something the country failed to overcome, with the crisis of 2001 as an inextinguishable proof.

### 3. Analysis of Kirchner's foreign policy – Between rhetoric and pragmatism

The political situation in South America in the year 2003 was the result of the past years of neoliberalism. The crisis faced by South America brought a change of behaviour towards the hegemony and a movement to the left wing. In this chapter, the focus will be on the controversial relationship that Argentina had with the hegemony but also on the relationship with new partner countries. This is with the aim to understand whether, despite public speeches, Argentina changed its tendency of dependence from the hegemony under Kirchner's presidency.

#### 3.1 Restoring Political Credibility: The Left Behind in South America

In this subchapter, the analysis will focus on Néstor Kirchner at the beginning of his presidential mandate and his attempt to restore credibility in political institutions after the Menemist period and the tragedy posed by the 2001 economic collapse.

Restoring credibility meant to revive the population's faith in politics after a presidency that had left the country in a profound crisis and unresolved fundamental topics, such as the issue of human rights and the punishments for those culpable during the dictatorship.

This chapter will also study how this shift to the left did not only occur in Argentina, but was a tendency adopted and widespread in many other Latin American countries. These countries were Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia,

Paraguay, Ecuador, Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina (Colombo 2011, 7). Now, left-wing leaders were refocusing on those issues left behind by the neoliberals.

This thesis has highlighted the fact that not all populists in Latin America felt represented by the Presidents self-recognized as such back in the 90s. Thomas Shannon<sup>38</sup> (2006) suggested an explanation on how this lack of representation triggered a new tendency in the 21st century in countries like Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay after the neoliberal period in the 90s.

“El populismo de hoy trae consigo un grado de resentimiento social producto de una opinión y de una creencia de que las elites políticas y las elites económicas no han cumplido su papel, que se han situado aparte de sus sociedades, y no han encontrado una manera de colocar las instituciones para funcionar y crear un ambiente en el cual las personas pueden realmente sentirse ciudadanos económicos y sociales en su propio país.”<sup>39</sup> (Shannon 2006).

A new left was then born. Its success depended from the failure of the previous mandates and the weaknesses of the neoliberal parties.

Jorge Castaneda<sup>40</sup> drew a distinction between two types of left-wing movements born in Latin America in the beginning of the 2000s. One was characterized by its openness and modern approach, as Brazilian Lula Da Silva, Chilean Michelle Bachelet, and Uruguayan Tabaré Vázquez. The other fraction of the new Latin

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<sup>38</sup> Under Secretary of State of the United States for the Western Hemisphere Affairs, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> English: “Today’s populism comes along with a social resentment because of the opinion and the belief that the political and economic elites had not fulfilled their role. They had acted separately from their societies, and they had not found the way to make the institutions work and create an environment where people can really feel as economic and social citizens of their own country.” Shannon, Thomas (2006).

<sup>40</sup> Castaneda, Jorge (2006), *Latin America’s left turn*, (foreign affairs).

American left evidenced a nationalist tendency; this was the case of Venezuelan Hugo Chávez, Bolivian Evo Morales, and Argentinean Néstor Kirchner.

Despite their differences, some leaders from these two left-wing groups shared characteristics. For example, Venezuela, Brazil, and Bolivia started this new era with a big common goal: opposing the Washington consensus. They represented a new generation of social movements driven by this same purpose.

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez termed his policies as “21st Century Socialism,” stressing his political tendency. He created the “Alternativa Bolivariana<sup>41</sup> para las Américas” (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, ALBA).

The aim of this institution promoted by Cuba and Venezuela, which also involved Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Ecuador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda, was to establish an alternative organization to the ALCA<sup>42</sup>, the international organization promoted precisely by the United States. ALBA was a sign of breaking from the hegemony after a period when the United States exerted leadership in the global level and in the South American countries as well.

In the case of Argentina, Néstor Kirchner came into the picture during a strong internal crisis. The president’s main goal was to restore the political credibility on social and economic issues. The credibility was mainly in terms of assistance to the market, to be present as a state in order to prevent a new economic crisis from happening.

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<sup>41</sup> The adjective “Bolivarian” refers to Simón Bolívar.

<sup>42</sup> Free trade Area of Americas

President Kirchner's foreign policy was strongly influenced by the default<sup>43</sup> and the critical indebtedness with the IMF (International Monetary Fund). Mr. Kirchner did not have a good relationship with the IMF, since he blamed the international organization for the crisis Argentina was suffering from.

Mr. Kirchner named his plan to restore the economy and bring back the credibility as "Capitalismo en serio" (or "serious" capitalism):

"Capitalismo con reglas claras en las que el Estado cumpla su rol con inteligencia, para regular, para controlar, para estar presente donde haga falta mitigar los males que el Mercado no repara. Un estado que ponga equilibrio en la sociedad y que permita el normal funcionamiento del país. Capitalismo en serio donde no imperen los monopolios y donde se evite la concentración que ahogue la iniciativa de los pequeños y medianos empresarios. Capitalismo en serio donde se proteja al inversor también al consumidor, con marcos regulatorios explícitos y transparentes y organismos de control que cumplan su rol." <sup>44</sup> (Kirchner 2004)

With this statement, Mr. Kirchner explained his purposes in terms of change, clearly highlighting his break with the previous administrations and the past.

The main issue was credibility. After the economic collapse in 2001, the political class lost its credibility. "Que se vayan todos" (Kick them all out!) was

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<sup>43</sup> Default situation with the private creditor holders of public debt titles

<sup>44</sup> English: "Capitalism with clear rules, where the state intelligently fulfils its role, to regulate, to control, to be present wherever mitigating the ills of the market is required. A state that would provide balance to society and would permit the normal functioning of the country. Serious capitalism, where monopolies do not rule and the concentration that drown the initiative of the small and medium entrepreneurs is prevented. Serious capitalism where the investor and the consumer are protected, with explicit and transparent regulatory frameworks and institutions fulfilling their roles." Kirchner, Néstor, 2004.

the typical chanting during big demonstrations in disapproval of the political class, depicting the loss of faith and yearning for change.

To amend the situation, he implemented the “Plan trabajar” (“Get to Work Plan”) created by former President Eduardo Duhalde, and launched “Plan de jefes y jefas de familias” (“Male and Female Heads of Household Plan”).<sup>45</sup> He also promoted a food plan and increased the minimum wage of retired persons. (Calrin 10 July 2003)

These were the so called “aid plans,” which were directly correlated with the aid plans implemented by General Juan Domingo Perón during his mandate. These plans were not gratefully accepted by everyone, especially not by those supporting the promotion of international links as a path to development and rejecting economic sovereignty (Montero, Vincent 2013, IV).

The stance adopted by Mr. Kirchner’s administration can be thought from a macro and microeconomic point of view. Kirchnerism sought microeconomic development, as it focused on policies to enhance the local economy rather than pursuing relationships abroad.

Further to the above, authors of the article “Del peronismo impuro al kirchnerismo puro”<sup>46</sup> (Soledad Montero, Vincent 2013) explain the closeness of Mr. Kirchner’s first policies to the traditional Perón’s Peronism. He introduced himself before the population in a “low” manner and closer to the lower classes of society, just as Mr. Perón did during his presidency. This was not just in terms of appearance, but in terms of policies, such as Mr. Perón’s social aid. Just as the founder of the movement, Néstor Kirchner’s goal was to restore the power of the state to regulate the economy and the society. His way of implementing

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<sup>45</sup> It gave 159 pesos per month to those unemployed who were heads of a household.

<sup>46</sup> Eng: From Pure Peronism to Pure Kirchnerism.

social aid attracted many detractors, including his predecessor Eduardo Duhalde.<sup>47</sup>

The aim of restoring credibility was even more clear when it came to human rights. Previous policies in this regard were not efficiently introduced and had no positive results, leading to failure. The wound of the dictatorship was even deeper. The attitude during the 80s and 90s was to focus on the future, leaving key issues unsolved such as the punishments for those culpable of heinous crimes during the dictatorship in the 70s.

In 2003, the Supreme Court of Justice declared the unconstitutionality of the Full Stop and Due Obedience Laws (“Ley de punto final”<sup>48</sup> and “Ley de obediencia debida”<sup>49</sup>). In 2004, Judge Canicoba Corral declared the unconstitutionality of the indulges promoted by Mr. Menem during his mandate. Actually, those laws weakened the penalties for the protagonists of the dictatorship.

“La corte suprema de nuestro país ha emitido un fallo que nos devuelve la fe y la justicia, ha declarado la inconstitucionalidad de las leyes de Obediencia Debida y Punto Final, que nos llenaban de vergüenza a los argentinos.”<sup>50</sup>  
(Kirchner 2005)

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<sup>47</sup> President of Argentina, 2 January 2002 – 25 May 2003

<sup>48</sup> Law 23,492, 1986. This law extinguished the criminal actions of those who participated in the political repression and had not been committed for trial until sixty days after the enactment of the law.

<sup>49</sup> Law 23,521, 1986. Lower military levels were declared innocent on the basis that they had just followed orders.

<sup>50</sup> English: “The Supreme Court of our country has issued a ruling which restores faith and justice; it has declared the unconstitutionality of the Full Stop and Due Obedience Laws, which filled Argentines with shame.” Néstor Kirchner, Villa María, Córdoba, 14 June 2005.

These actions were the answer to the politics of forgetfulness. Some politicians criticised Néstor Kirchner, blaming him for seeking revenge instead of focusing on the future and seeking peace. In response to those accusations, he said:

“Este gobierno no está contra la reconciliación ni busca la venganza, este gobierno desea lo que quiere la mayoría del pueblo argentino: reconciliación con justicia, con memoria y con verdad.”<sup>51</sup> (Kirchner 2007)

The pursuit for internal justice brought about external consequences. As previously explained, the lack of a plan in the field of human rights resulted in weakness for Argentina at the international level in the previous years. However, the new path taken in this regard showed to the world Argentina’s attempt to reach international standards.

Despite the above, Argentina was still internally afflicted by a deep crisis, an elevated level of unemployment and suffered from social classes related issues. Neoliberalism had provoked an extreme division of social classes in the country.

Mr. Kirchner’s foreign policy was driven by the new values and the new political plan, reintroducing previously neglected issues such as human rights and the external debt. The new administration was fully aware of the weaknesses inherited from neoliberalism and that new plans required to be introduced. This was the predominant tone in Mr. Kirchner’s presidential inauguration speech:

“Vengo a proponerles un sueño: quiero una Argentina unida, quiero una Argentina normal, quiero que seamos un país serio, pero además, quiero un

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<sup>51</sup> English: “This Government is not against reconciliation and neither seeks revenge; this Government wishes what most of the Argentine people does: reconciliation with justice, with memory and with truth.” Néstor Kirchner, 125th session of the National Congress, 1st March 2007.

país más justo. Anhele que por estos caminos se levante a la faz de la tierra una nueva y gloriosa Nación: la nuestra.”<sup>52</sup> (Kirchner 2003)

With the next part we will see to what extent this dream to restore a glorious nation is achieved, and the evolution of the relationship with the hegemony.

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<sup>52</sup> English: “I am here to propose a dream: I want a united Argentina, I want a normal Argentina, I want us to be a serious country, but also a fair country. I long for a new and glorious nation that would take this path and rise: Our Nation.” Presidential inauguration speech of Néstor Kirchner (2003)

### 3.2 Integration with Latin American Countries and the “Mature” Relationship with the United States

In the previous subchapter, the analysis focused on Néstor Kirchner’s first policies to restore the “glorious nation” of Argentina and the credibility towards the political class. Mr. Kirchner’s goals also consisted in attaining economic independence and becoming autonomous from the hegemonic power: The United States. This subchapter will centre on the complicated and controversial relationship with the hegemony.

The President’s speeches expressed his intent to become independent from the United States. However, the strong relationship with the “big” country established in the 90s by the neoliberals seemed difficult to dissolve.

Mr. Kirchner’s actions during his administration in this regard can be classified in two categories: actions that seemed to hide an attempt to become closer to the United States and, on the contrary, those which followed his clear purpose of breaking away from the hegemony and becoming autonomous.

Many aspects of Néstor Kirchner’s administration clearly accounted for his attempt to reach autonomy. One of them was his approach to neighbouring countries as Brazil, and the development of Mercosur. As previously seen in chapter 1.2, this tendency of maintaining relationships with “similar” countries is brilliantly explained by G. Figari:

“La relación entre países desarrollados-subdesarrollados es una relación mando-obediencia, que no es una relación que nos pueda llevar a practicar una política autónoma, sino de dependencia.”<sup>53</sup> (Figari 1985, 25)

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<sup>53</sup> English: “The relation between developed and underdeveloped countries is a command-obedience relationship, which is not a type of relationship leading to autonomist politics, but of dependency.” Figari, G. (1985), “*Pautas para la elaboración de una política exterior*

Therefore, Mr. Kirchner's autonomist tendency was in precise contraposition to the neoliberal tendency of the 90s. In 2003, during his speech to the parliament, he named his model as "modelo propio" ("own model"). He defined a "new" model in terms of development, which actually shared many aspects with Perón's Peronism and even with Frondizi's developmentalism.

This "modelo propio" seemed to be completely independent from the United States. However, Mr. Kirchner's administration established multilateral relations with the US and shared political and economic topics, as shall be studied in detail later in this paragraph.

His "independency" mission was evident even during his campaign, as depicted in a clearly autonomist speech during the 2003 electoral campaign.

"Una supuesta autarquía o aislamiento, lo que significa que la nación debe recuperar la capacidad de decisión y de discernimiento acerca del modo en que nuestro país debe insertarse en el mundo globalizado, discriminando entre sus elementos positivos, a los que nos sumaremos, y neutralizando el impacto de sus aspectos negativos."<sup>54</sup> (Kirchner 2003)

Mr. Kirchner left the unconditional alignment with the United States to achieve a mature relationship with the country. This very "mature relationship" with the United States was the thin line that separated the "autonomous" purpose of his speech from the wish to sustain relations with the United States.

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*argentina de carácter autonomista", Mundo nuevo, revista de estudios latino americanos, p 25.*

<sup>54</sup> English: "A supposed autarchy or isolationism, which means that the Nation must recover its capacity of decision-making and discernment regarding the way our country should enter the globalized world, identifying its positive elements, which we will adopt, and neutralizing the impact of its negative aspects." Néstor Kirchner, 2003.

One of the reasons to hold a friendly relationship with the United States was the dire situation that Argentina was facing with the external debt. In fact, keeping a “good” relationship with the hegemony was fundamental to put an end to the external debt, as explained by former Foreign Minister Bielsa:

“Estados Unidos es un país amigo con el que tenemos un intercambio comercial importante para nosotros, y además tenemos un severo problema de deuda y en todas las instancias la voz de Estados Unidos es una voz no trivial.”

<sup>55</sup> (Bielsa 2003)

Having a relationship with the United States was also important as Argentina was becoming less relevant at the international level due to its tough economic and political scenario. Russel<sup>56</sup> defined it as follows:

“Argentina es, a los ojos de Washington, un país ambiguo, en estado de observación. Su modelo político y económico no encaja en la categoría de los «populismos radicales» latinoamericanos, pero deja lugar a dudas, incertidumbres y confusión.”<sup>57</sup> (Russel 2018)

Mr. Kirchner’s administration was asking for understanding to the United States, just as they had in previous years when received help during negotiations with the IMF. This made it clear that the new administration wanted to keep the United States close, despite the public speeches.

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<sup>55</sup> English: “The United States is a friend country and an important commercial partner for us. We also have a severe debt problem, and the US is a nontrivial voice in all instances.” “Kirchner habló con Bush y Bielsa definió su lema para las relaciones”, newspaper, pg. 12, Saturday 24th March, 2003.

<sup>56</sup> Russel, R “La relacion Argentina-Estados Unidos. Pocas expectativas en Buenos Aires y Washington”, Foreign affairs Latino America, Vol. 8, N°4, 2008. In Torres 2010

<sup>57</sup> English: “Argentina is, in the eyes of Washington, an ambiguous country, under observation. Its political and economic model does not fall into the category of Latin American ‘radical populisms,’ but arises doubts, uncertainty and confusion.” Russel, 2008.

There were two ways of interpreting Argentina's approach to its relationship with the United States. One is to seek an intimately close relation with the US, and the other represents the wish of putting an end to dependence.

As already mentioned, Mr. Kirchner was keeping a relation with the US after the decreasing relevance of Argentina's international role, and therefore required a strong partner. However, this relationship was risked when Argentina found in Venezuela a commercial partner. The US did not approve of this new alliance, as expressed during the Summit of the Americas in Mar del Plata, Argentina, 2005. In Russel's words:

“El ex presidente argentino [N. Kirchner] utilizó la Cumbre de las Américas, realizada en Mar del Plata en noviembre de 2005, para reprobar a Estados Unidos por sus políticas actuales y pasadas, algo ciertamente impropio de un país anfitrión. Además, facilitó a Hugo Chávez un escenario para que desplegara sus críticas al «imperialismo yanqui», en una suerte de cumbre paralela de los pueblos.”<sup>58</sup> (Russel 2008)

Néstor Kirchner and Hugo Chávez were on the same political wavelength, and these increased bilateral relations between the two countries. Between 2003 and 2007, the agreements signed between Argentina and Venezuela represented 60% of the total bilateral agreements signed since 1911. Therefore, Venezuela was the country with which Argentina had established the highest number of international agreements. (Colombo 2011, 41)

In addition to the above, just to highlight the scope of this relation, during the 2003-2008 period, the total value of their bilateral exchange experienced a

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<sup>58</sup> English: “The former Argentine President [N. Kirchner] used the Summit of the Americas, held in Mar del Plata, Argentina in 2005, to condemn its past and current policies, something certainly improper from a host country. Moreover, he facilitated the scenario for Hugo Chávez to display his criticism against the Yankee imperialism, in some sort of parallel summit of the peoples.” Russel, 2008.

970% increase worth US\$ 1.422 billion in 2008, while in 2003 it was US\$ 146 million. (Colombo 2011, 71)

Therefore, Argentina and Venezuela held a strategic alliance to establish a new model of socio-economic development and bilateral integration with the purpose of reaching a South American autonomy. This meant no more automatic line-ups with the hegemony or priority treatment to the American power on economic matters.

Despite the above, some signs showed that President Kirchner had at least a slight implicit intention to keep a good relationship with the US. One reason to think this was Argentina's decision to send troops to Haiti for restoring peace, which indirectly permitted the United States to use their troops for other "more relevant" missions, such as the Afghanistan and Iraq war. This placed Argentina just in the border between independent tendencies and "mature" cooperation.

As observed in detail, when seeking autonomy and independence, Argentina usually approaches Brazil. The Kirchnerist administration followed the same path, aimed at enhancing the integration with neighbouring countries and implementing Mercosur.

Historically, the bilateral relations between Argentina and Brazil have been characterized by periods of confrontation and of cooperation. After the 80s, both countries agreed on working together to develop their collaboration and integration. Jorge Torres (1997) observed that the countries were aware of the timely occasion for establishing a bilateral cooperation:

“Argentina y Brasil estaban en condiciones de dar una respuesta conjunta, global y profunda, con una acción inmediata de carácter bilateral, pero

impregnada de una definida voluntad integradora regional, en un esquema superador de carácter fundacional de una nueva alianza.”<sup>59</sup> (Torres 1997)

With these assumptions, the Treaty of Asunción was signed in 1991. However, a change was adopted by Mr. Kirchner’s government. His initial focus was to implement the relationship with the other “big” country of the Mercosur. But the divergence with the president of Brazil, Lula Da Silva, made Argentina turn to Venezuela to establish commercial links. These “divergences” were, for instance, the reform of the Security Council, the creation of the South American Community of Nations and the completely different plan to solve the debt. All these factors initiated in 2006 the process of Venezuela’s entry to the Mercosur. The process lasted 6 years due to the opposition of Paraguay.

In order to understand the changes in the relationship with other Latin American countries introduced by President Kirchner, it is worth considering that Mercosur was established in 1991, during Carlos Menem’s mandate. Due to the neoliberal policies of this presidency, the Mercosur’s main focus was to establish economic and commercial links between the members, leaving behind other topics concerning social and political integration, since Mr. Menem’s foreign policy’s priority was to establish an alliance with the United States.

Therefore, this was the moment to have a wider Mercosur. The goal of dealing with more topics in the Mercosur was related to the progressist image that Kirchner’s government wanted to achieve, which would enforce its profile at the international level.

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<sup>59</sup> English: “Argentina and Brazil were in conditions to provide a joint, global and deep response, with an immediate bilateral action, but pervaded by a defined and comprehensive regional will, in a better scheme serving as the foundation of a new alliance.” Torres, J.J., *Mercosur: Objetivos, avances y asignaturas pendientes, Integración en ideas*, Instituto para la Integración y el Desarrollo Latinoamericano (IDELA/UNT), Argentina, September 1997.

Despite divergences with Brazil, Argentina never stopped the integration process with its big neighbour. In fact, after the 2001 crisis and the neoliberal period, Argentina and Brazil started new relations, not just economic but also political.

Foreign Minister Bielsa explained the new role of the Mercosur, as an accomplishment of the Kirchnerist administration:

“No es solo un bloque comercial lo que buscamos, aspiramos a conformar un espacio económico, político y cultural unificado que —al generar un renovado sentido de pertenencia— nos permita crecer como sociedades integradas y modernas. El Mercosur adquirirá su valor sociocultural cuando sus efectos se hagan sentir en la vida cotidiana de los ciudadanos. No se trata de aspirar a conformar un pueblo común, sino una ciudadanía común.”<sup>60</sup> (Bielsa 2004)

The fact that the political tendencies of this period in the region were similar (left, centre-left) is of course a point to keep into account to understand why the integration process was so successful during the negotiations. A similar ideology and shared ideas were the key to achieve common goals.

The novelty in terms of “political integration” in addition to the purely economic one, was for example the creation of the Structural Convergence Fund (FOCEM). In the 2007 Mercosur Summit in Rio de Janeiro, members created a fund to solve their differences in terms of development. In 2005, the Parlasur was created, which would serve as a unique parliament for all member countries.

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<sup>60</sup> English: “We are not only looking for a trade bloc, we wish to create a unified economic, political and cultural space which —after generating a renewed sense of belonging— would allow us to grow as integrated and modern societies. Mercosur will acquire its sociocultural value once its effects become present in its citizens’ everyday lives. It is not about wishing to create a common people, but a common citizenship.” Bielsa, 2004.

Further to the above mentioned actions, it seems clear that the “modelo propio” established by Mr. Kirchner to achieve a mature relationship with the hegemony was too pretentious and perhaps more rhetoric than pragmatic. Despite his improved relationship with “similar” countries, Mr. Kirchner administration did not break away with the hegemony, mainly due to the fact that Argentina was becoming less internationally relevant and was in need of a strong partner that would provide support its economy, stressed even more by the huge external debt.

### 3.3 A New Commercial Partner: China

This thesis has analysed so far that one of the main purposes of Argentine Presidents has been to clearly place Argentina at the international level and find its international role. In order to do so, Juan Domingo Perón had already tried during his mandate to change the role of Argentina from just an exporter of raw materials based to an exporter of manufactured products and goods with a higher value added. This goal was to differentiate the supply of goods for the export to end with the “soy dependence,” i.e. the dependence from the export of soy beans.

“Lo fundamental es la diagramación de una estrategia política y de comercialización para diversificar los productos y los destinos a los fines de vender mayor valor agregado, reduciendo la participación relativa de los commodities en la oferta exportadora, evitando las fluctuaciones de precios tan frecuente en esos mercados.”<sup>61</sup> (Kirchner 2003)

This goal was the principal theme of discussion during the visit of Nestor Kirchner to China in 2004. After 5 days of meetings, entrepreneurs expressed their positivity for the relationship with the country: “En Beijing nos convencimos de que China no es un futuro, en la relación con la Argentina, sino una realidad.”<sup>62</sup>

Exports from Latin America to China stood at US\$ 5,400 in 2000 and grew then 42% every year from 2000 to 2004. Exports were not manufactured products, but always raw materials as oil, iron and agro-products, a tendency which lasted

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<sup>61</sup>English: “The fundamental point is to design a political and commercial strategy to diversify products and their destinations with the aim of selling more value added, reducing the relative participation of commodities in the exporter supply, and avoiding the fluctuation of prices which are so frequent in those markets.” Néstor Kirchner, 2003.

<sup>62</sup> English: “After Beijing, we are convinced that the relationship between China and Argentina is not the future, but a reality.”

even until recent. Therefore, China became an important commercial partner, but not for the export of manufactured products as expected in 2004 during the state visit.

There are a few factors which explain the reason why Néstor Kirchner was so attracted to China and therefore decided to implement a commercial relationship. First of all, after about three decades of deep control in the economic structure of China with President Mao Zedong, during the second half of the 20th century, China opened its doors to the world. From 1978 to 1989, the country's objective was to reduce poverty and in 2001 to enter the WTO. For the first time, foreign capital was allowed to enter China, trade barriers were reduced, and private property was finally legalized in 2005.

All these changes were known as "the China miracle," since this country became the main developing country to receive foreign direct investments in 1993 and one of the top three in the world in 2003 and 2005.

Exchange between Argentina and China skyrocketed between 2002 and 2003. The value of Argentine exports to China increased by 227%, from US\$ 1.09 billion to US\$ 2.48 billion.

**Origen y destino de Importaciones y Exportaciones  
Año 2003  
(En millones de dólares)**

	<b>Exportaciones</b>	<b>Importaciones</b>
<b>Mercosur</b>	<b>5582</b>	<b>5167</b>
<b>Chile</b>	<b>3421</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>Resto de ALADI</b>	<b>1180</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>NAFTA</b>	<b>4177</b>	<b>2584</b>
<b>UE</b>	<b>5836</b>	<b>2710</b>
<b>ASEAN</b>	<b>1106</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>2551</b>	<b>742</b>
<b>Corea</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Japón</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>395</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>547</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Medio Oriente</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Totales</b>	<b>26012</b>	<b>12664</b>

Figure 3.1 Centro de Economía Internacional (Centre of International Economy), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, Argentine Republic.

This data encouraged President Kirchner to organize the official visit in 2004 to deepen the commercial relationship with China. Above figures 3.1 refer only to the export of raw materials, as oil and soy, but not to value added or manufactured products, which Mr. Kirchner wanted to promote at the beginning of his discussions.

Discussions continued in Buenos Aires on 16th November 2004, where the expectations of the Argentine President to sign an agreement were broken, as Chinese President Hu Jintao proposed a letter of intent promising a commercial relationship valued US\$ 19.71 billion.

The only official data in this period was that while Argentina invested US\$ 100 million in China, China invested only US 11 million in Argentina.

Despite the figures, this round of meetings and agreements with China were fundamental to change the image of Argentina at the international level. In fact,

after the economic default in 2001, the perception of Argentina was of an isolated country facing deep economic problems, something that changed after the negotiations with China. This was defined as the “fourth stage”<sup>63</sup> in the relationship with China. The “fourth stage” is the so called “China factor” that in the 20th century was part of the restoration plan of Argentina, which consisted of the export of soy and oil-based products to China, giving rise to an important financial entry for the country.

President Kirchner wanted to establish a purely economic relationship with China. The two official visits had the economic agenda as the main topic of every meeting. The episode of the letter of intent was an example of political interaction, but it strengthened the economic one, as expressed by the Argentine negotiator: “No hay política comercial sin acuerdos políticos.” (Clarín 7 November 2004)

The goal of Kirchner’s administration was actually to find a strong extra-regional partner to boost the re-industrialization of Argentina after the crisis of 2001, but as explained at the beginning of this subchapter, the objective of starting trade of manufactured goods was not achieved and this “strategic alliance” at the international level was just a public expression of support for themes as the public debt and the Malvina’s issue, but there was not a concrete international action.

The balance of payments was another point that showed that the interaction between Argentina and China did not bring the expected results. The imports of

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<sup>63</sup> The “first stage” (1972-1983), known as the foundational stage, consisted of the first agreements. The second stage (1983-1983) was the restoration of democracy and the diversification of the agenda. The third stage is the 90s period and the expansion of trade. Colombo, Sandra, *La inserción internacional de Argentina durante la presidencia de Néstor Kirchner: un cambio de época*. – 1a ed. – Tandil: el autor, 201.

China into Argentina grew more than the exports of Argentina to China, reaching a negative balance of payments in 2008 for the first time since 2001.

The purpose of President N. Kirchner at the beginning of his relationship with China is completely understandable. They were looking for a new commercial partner, different from the United States, to develop their economy in terms of exports of goods with major value added as Mr. Bielsa had explained during his first trip to Pekin:

“La Argentina fue un país de una sola oferta, por eso nos llamaban el granero del mundo, pero el mundo cambió. Con solo la importación de alimentos hoy no hay un destino de crecimiento sostenido. Hoy hay un montón de industrias para complementar la oferta tradicional del país.<sup>64</sup>” (Bielsa 2004)

However, with China being one of the biggest exporters of manufactured goods, Argentina was not able to achieve its goal. Actually, the trade between the two was established to export raw materials from Argentina to China, helping the Argentine economy, but not in terms of Juan Doming Perón’s imports substitution plan. The agro-export model is a constant in the Argentine foreign policy and in its insertion in the global context.

Mr. Kirchner’s mandate started in a situation of crisis with a main goal of restoring credibility in political institutions. In order to do so, he implemented new political plans that reminded of Mr. Peron’s famous aid plans. He also gave importance to the human rights issue by restarting the discussion on the crimes that had taken place during the last dictatorship, something that had been completely ignored during previous neoliberal administration. This chapter

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<sup>64</sup> English: “Argentina was a country with one thing to offer, that is why they called us the breadbasket of the world. But the world changed. Only with the import of food, there is no scope for sustainable growth today. Today there are many industries to complement the traditional offer of the country.” Bielsa, 2004.

focused on Argentina's attempts to find new commercial partners, to slightly loosen the deep relationship with the United States and to change its international role as agro exporter. Despite the closeness to Venezuela as a new commercial partner and to China as exporter of manufactured products, this did not bring the expected results. Actually, due to the facts that China is one of the biggest exporters of manufactured goods, the imports of China into Argentina grew more than the exports of Argentina to China and therefore Argentina was not able to achieve its goal. The agro-export model is a constant in the Argentine foreign policy and in its insertion in the global context. However the relationship with China had also a positive outcome, to change the image of Argentina at the international level after the crisis of 2001.

#### 4. Comparison of foreign politics, constants and differences between “first peronism” of Perón and the following former presidents

Peronism seems to be automatically defined as a populist movement. The first part of this chapter will attempt to clarify the very meaning of populism to understand why Peronism can be tagged as such. This is with the aim of analysing the shared policies between General Juan Domingo Perón as “First Peronism” and his successors Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner. Peronism will be analysed by applying the three banners of Peronism to Menemism and Kirchnerism. For this analysis, I have been inspired by a thorough verbal discussion with Professor Paola De Simone and by Sergio Eissa’s article, which analyses the constants in Argentine Foreign Policy. These constants highlight the characteristics of the Argentine foreign policy until today with Mr. Mauricio Macri as president, whose policies will confirm the dependent condition of Argentina from the hegemony.

##### 4.1 Peronism as a Populist Movement in Latin America

“Existe un zapato, la palabra “populismo”, para el cual existe un pie en algún lugar. Existen toda clase de pies que casi lo pueden calzar, pero no nos deben engañar estos pies que casi ajustan a su medida. En la búsqueda, el príncipe siempre vaga errante con el zapato; y en algún lugar, estamos seguros, espera un pie denominado populismo puro.” (J.B Allock 1971, 385)

Above sentence by J.B. Allock defines, in a way, the concept of populism, but at the same time, involves the very meaning of this word.

Starting from the three precedents of populism, this subchapter would try to move deeply into the concept of populism. To do so, the three analyses of

populism developed by Gino Germani, Francisco Weffort and Ernesto Laclau will be used as a guide.

The concept of populism will be then compared with Peronism, in order to understand which characteristics of populism were mainly present in Peronism and why Peronism has been always defined as a populist movement.

As assessed in Patricia Funes text book (Funes 2014), the Latin American society is better defined by the concept of “population” rather than “citizens.” Actually, the word “citizens” refers to a state ruled by democracy; instead, “population” refers to a more “collective” connotation, a notion which is closer to the Latin American values (Zanatta 2004). This concept of “population” is well recognizable by focusing on three essential points of the Latin American politics, and that since 1912 have set the basis for the born of populism in the subsequent years.

The first point was the enactment of the Mexican Constitution in 1917. This was the direct consequence to the Mexican Revolution and the starting point to creating a “population.” Secondly, at the same time in Argentina, President Roque Sáenz Peña was conducting a deep project of social inclusion: in 1912, the Sáenz Peña Law meant the extension of the political participation to the population, which brought the Radicals into power in 1916, headed by President Hipólito Yrigoyen. The third political fact that was essential for the birth of populism was the so called “Aprista” party,<sup>65</sup> founded in 1930 by Peruvian president Haya de la Torre. The Aprista party was the national party, where all the facets of the nation were represented.

All these movements were presented as the emblem of the nation. Those three above-mentioned cases can be considered as the seed of populism, that would develop in the 30s and 40s in Latin America. In that context, individual characteristics of citizens lost their value into the crowds (Funes 2014, 141).

After the Mexican Revolution, an anti-imperialist (anti North America) tendency unleashed. In fact, the Mexican Revolution was a national revolution, and this national project was created by keeping an enemy in mind: The United States. Even the Peruvian Aprista party was based in “anti-imperialist” values.

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<sup>65</sup> Peruvian Aprista Party (PAP), 1930.

According to Haya de la Torre, imperialism was the first step to capitalism in Latin America:

“Para nuestros pueblos, el capital incorporado o inmigrado plantea la etapa inicial de su edad capitalista moderna”<sup>66</sup>

For him, imperialism is the reason and the cause of the capitalistic relations in the region. He considered that Latin American societies were feudal until the entry of foreign capital. Thus, capitalism in Latin America was not a self-generated phenomenon using Latin American resources, but thanks to external aid. This marked the dependent tendency of Latin American countries from the United States, according to Haya de la Torre. These anti-imperialist values laid the foundations for the next populism.

It is clearly not simple to define populism, as it involves many aspects such as the type of leadership, political regimes, political party, ideologies, etc (Funes 2014, 188). It is important to keep in mind that there are no political movements in Latin America that define themselves as “populist”; this is a later given definition.

Actually, both wings of the political spectrum (left and right) have criticised populism. The right and more conservative wing criticised populism due to its demagogic way to exercise power and raise the masses’ expectations. At the same time, the left criticised this movement as they claimed that populist leaders manipulated the workers to control them, destroying their revolutionary characteristics.

There are some aspects that seem to be common in every movement ever defined as populist. Generally speaking, populisms are as anti-liberal as anti-communist and, in many cases, they give importance to the population and citizenship values extending citizens political rights, as the right to vote, by both providing this right (as Eva Perón with the women’s suffrage) and by becoming president with regular elections, even after a coup d’état, as Juan Domingo Perón in 1946. Populism also talks to huge masses by exercising personalist and authoritarian leadership. (Funes 2014, 189).

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<sup>66</sup> English: “For our peoples, the incorporated or immigrated capital represents the starting stage of the modern Capitalist age.” Funes, 2014, 141.

Populists have some characteristics in their way of governing a state that can be considered typical of both the left and right wing of politics. The extension of social rights, anti-imperialism (sometimes, just rhetoric), and the development of union systems are aspects pertaining to the left. Instead, industrial development as well as the development of domestic markets are characteristics that belong to the right wing.

Patricia Funes identifies three interpretations of populism (Funes 2014, 190). The first one, developed by Gino Germani in the 50s, defined populism as a movement of transition from a traditional to a modern society.

“Los movimientos nacionales-populares son la forma de intervención en la vida política nacional de las capas sociales tradicionales, en el transcurso de su movilización acelerada.”<sup>67</sup>

In this period of transition, the masses did not feel represented by the institutions and therefore needed to find out a way to be active in politics. These crowds are not able at the same time to organize themselves, hence the emergence of a populist leader.

The second interpretation of populism, by Francisco Weffort in the 60s, explains populism as a way to control the oligarchy and the working class. On the one hand, an oligarchy in crisis that does not want to lose its social and political power; on the other hand, workers looking for a revolution but in need of a leader. The populist leader managed these two powers to establish its own power.

“Una estructura de poder para los grupos dominantes, pero también una forma de expresión política de la irrupción popular en el proceso de desarrollo industrial y urbano.”<sup>68</sup>

The third and last definition, by Ernesto Laclau, presents populism as a social demand for the needs which are not met by the state, giving rise to a mechanism of solidarity among the unsatisfied citizens that develops in a popular identity.

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<sup>67</sup> English: “National popular movements are the way of intervention in the national political life of the traditional social layers during an accelerated mobilization process.” Germani, 1950s. Quotation obtained from Funes, 2014, p. 191.

<sup>68</sup> English: A power structure for the dominating groups, but a way of political expression of the popular outbreak in the process of industrial and urban development.” Weffort, 1960. Quotation obtained from Funes, 2014, p. 193.

This is the best scenario where populism and the populist leader can develop their policies and establish their power (Funes 2014, 195).

These three definitions of populism have mainly clarified the circumstances under which populist movements can take place. These circumstances of transition, crisis, dissatisfaction, etc. are the pillars used by a populist leader to “save” the situation and take office (Zanatta 2004). This line of thought accords with the image of the populist leader as a manager, comparable to the caudillos of the 1800s.

These characteristics actually match with the Peronist profile, as explained by Patricia Funes:

“Consideramos que si la categoría populismo posee alguna capacidad explicativa, es decir comparativa [...], lo es en los denominados populismos clásicos (cardenismo, varguismo, peronismo)”<sup>69</sup> (Funes 2014, 191)

Thus, with this sentence, P. Funes confirmed that the Peronist movement can be considered as populist and therefore populist characteristics can be recognised in the Peronist movement. Considering the dynamic attribute of Peronism, it would be interesting to analyse whether the two Peronist presidents who are subject of study in this thesis, Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner, may be considered populist, or if populist elements may be identified in their administrations. For instance, both presidents took office in the middle of a crisis, assuming the strong-leader role. The concept of dynamism will be better explored in section 4.2.

Alternatively, Darío Rodríguez studied populism on the basis of leadership and its way of implementation by populist presidents (Rodríguez 2015, 637-80). Populist presidents prefer more informal manners and closer relations with the people, establishing a direct connection with the voters (Peruzzotti 2008).<sup>70</sup> This definition perfectly matches Ostiguy’s views on Peronist leaders. As previously seen at subchapter 1.3, the “low,” with a more informal tendency, is typical of Peronism.

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<sup>69</sup> English: “We consider that, if the category of populism has some explanatory capacity, that is to say comparative [...], it does in classic populisms (Cardenismo, Varguismo, Peronism.)” Funes, 2014, p. 191.

<sup>70</sup> in De la Torre, Peruzzotti 2008

With this analysis, we have understood how the huge economic and political crisis that Argentina faced during 1989 and 2001 were the perfect context for Peronist presidents (thus, populist) to easily establish their leadership. Their policies, in view of the lacklustre circumstances, were seen as the “very truth” and therefore followed by the masses (Novaro, Palermo 1996). The Peronist leader is seen as a saviour, and his actions are seen as the direct will of the people.

## 4.2 Peronism, Menemism, Kirchnerism: The Connections

To further analyse the foreign policies of Presidents Menem and Kirchner already presented in this thesis, a fundamental element to consider is that both were Peronist, or at least defined themselves as such.

In the previous sections of this thesis the main characteristics of Peronism were presented. However, this part will provide a thorough analysis of the shared policies between General Juan Domingo Perón’s “First Peronism” and his followers Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner. In order to do so, the focus will be put on the essential aspects of Peronism.

The purpose of this analysis is not to judge whether a president can or cannot be defined as Peronist, but to understand how close —or far— each Peronism (Menemism and Kirchnerism) is from the first Peronism of Perón.

Hence the importance of restricting, in this section, the term “Peronism” to the first Peronism of Perón. This point is significant in terms of analysis since General Perón will be the representative of the first Peronism when comparing to the administrations of Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner.

Peronism is defined as Western and Christian. It is Christian since the social justice of Peronism was based on the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The

relationship that the church had with the citizen was something that Peronism took as inspiration to establish its own relationship with the people.

Peronism is anti-Communist; its Christian component enforces the idea of anti-Communism. At the same time, Peronism is Western. It may not be purely capitalist but at the same time keeps its relationship with the West.

Another important aspect of Peronism is that presidents that belong to this movement have a strong capacity to adapt their policies to the situation they encountered when taking office. They adapt their administrations to reality. The other existing political models in Argentina are completely different in this sense, since they normally keep in force an inherited model or implement an own model that may not work, failing to adapt the model to the context.

This dynamic feature of Peronism is a constant and its greatest strength. This idea can only exist if there is a strong figure able to manage unstable situations. Hence Peronism's strong presidentialism. Peronist presidents are "managers." They face crises and, to finish these situations, they shape their policies accordingly (Torres Miguel 2010, 641). This concept is well defined in a sentence by the "Secretaria de prensa y diffusion" (1946): "La Argentina, mediante su tercera posición, brinda un ejemplo al mundo: ejemplo concreto de algo cumplido y realizado"<sup>71</sup>

Actually, as already seen, all three presidents that are now our subject of analysis started their mandate in a context of crisis where acknowledging the situation was paramount to implement the right policies.

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<sup>71</sup> English: "Argentina, through its third position, provides an example to the world: a concrete example of something accomplished and fulfilled." *La tercera posición en la prédica y el ejemplo de Perón*, 1946, Buenos Aires. *Presidencia de la Nación, Secretaría de Prensa y Difusión*. pp.12

In 1945, there was a context of political crisis after previous politicians had failed to manage the new crowds, the offspring of the migrant waves arriving from Europe after the end of the Second World War.

Many changes in the political scenario were introduced with the Post-War context, such as diminishing interactions with historic commercial partners and the fear of a catastrophic Third World War. All this permitted General Perón to create a new movement with new objectives.

In the case of Mr. Menem, he started his term in a serious economic crisis, with the ghost of the last dictatorship still looming in the political scenario. His policies seemed quite far from Mr. Perón's, but it was the context what influenced him to take such measures. In fact, the end of the Cold War extremely influenced the position of Argentina at the global scale during those years. Carlos Menem's policies clearly depicted his realistic approach; and at that time, reality proved that the United States was the undisputed hegemony. Mr. Menem's and Mr. Perón's policies actually shared more similarities than differences, as shall be seen later.

The Kirchnerist term also started in a period of crisis: the devastating default of 2001. At the international level, this period was also marked by the crisis of the capitalist model and the lack of an alternative. The public opinion supported the idea that Néstor Kirchner represented the return of Perón's Peronism, updated to the 21st century, since the international sphere had definitely changed since 1946.

First, three banners may be identified as the main symbols of Peronism, which have become a constant, either in strict terms or with some variations, in Menemism and Kirchnerism. The variations may be due to the different historical contexts of each movement, in which case these banners were adapted.

The Menemist and Kirchnerist administrations will be analysed and assessed as per the three constant banners of Peronism, which are: (1) Political sovereignty, (2) Economic independence, (3) Social justice. Menemist and Kirchnerist foreign policies will be analysed through the Peronist banners as they represent General Perón's implemented policies, including his foreign policy. The three banners are the pillars of Peronism, thus the most complete definition of the movement.

It is important to keep these three in order since one is the consequence of the other. To achieve social justice, economic independence is a must, and so is political sovereignty for the economic independence.

The following analysis of the three banners of Peronism applied to Menemism and Kirchnerism would determine how far or close the two more recent movements were from the original. This section will analyse where we can find Political Sovereignty, Economic Independence and Social Justice in Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner's policies. For academic purposes, the analysis will start with social justice, followed by economic independence and political sovereignty.

### Social Justice

As explained on chapter 1.2, analysing Ostiguy's article, it is not complete to define Peronism as belonging to the right or left wing of politics, since this approach would exclude many other key aspects that characterized the movement, which were the actual reasons for their success.

Perón's Peronism can be defined as "redistributive." This definition places it on the left wing; but at the same time, with authoritarian attributes, placing the movement on the right wing. Hence the rejection of the right-left spectrum in this case, centring the analysis on the implemented policies, their purposes and how the leader finally achieved its goals. It was Ostiguy himself who defined

populism as a combination of the centralized authority and the redistribution of resources.

In terms of social justice, it is essential to comprehend the redistribution of resources during the Menemist and the Kirchnerist administrations. In the case of Mr. Menem, based on the neoliberal ideology, privatizing companies was necessary to develop the country. This neoliberal tendency was the result of the previous policies that had driven the country to an economic crisis and an elevated debt. In such conditions, elected President Menem had to change the route and introduce new policies. The new protagonist was “the market,” which in neoliberal terms it is the element that can regulate the economy and therefore get hold of the Government’s role. It was a worldwide tendency: governments retracted themselves from the economy. This tendency started in the 70s and then came into force in the 80s, triggered by government’s failure to fulfil their role as per the people’s requirements. President Menem found himself in a crisis that needed to be addressed. His goal was to lower inflation by dollarizing the economy. It was the first time in history that Argentina managed to lower the inflation rate to such a low level.

It is important to be aware that the inflation rates hitting Argentina actually consisted in hyperinflation. In 1989, the inflation rate was 3.079%.<sup>72</sup> During Mr. Menem’s term, slashing hyperinflation and restoring the purchasing power was considered a way of redistributing wealth. In fact, General Perón implemented similar measures with his Second Five-Year Plan, introducing an agro-exporter plan based on the privatization of oil companies.

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<sup>72</sup> Historia de la inflación Argentina. Cámara Argentina de comercios y servicios. July 2018. Unidad de Estudios y Proyectos Especiales. [http://www.cac.com.ar/data/documentos/10\\_Historia%20de%20la%20inflación%20en%20Argentina.pdf](http://www.cac.com.ar/data/documentos/10_Historia%20de%20la%20inflación%20en%20Argentina.pdf)

For Mr. Menem, social justice meant to reduce inflation and increase Argentines' purchasing power. Instead of extending social aid, he implemented social justice by increasing salaries using American dollars as currency. This strategy was quite accurate. Extending social aid would not have been resolute in a hyperinflationary context. The President's peripheral realism which characterized his foreign policy also followed this citizen-centred approach.

Mr. Menem's policies did not bring the expected results in the long term. His neoliberal approach led to an economic catastrophe which culminated in 2001 with the economic default. Considering the negative results of his economic platform, one may suggest that the banner of social justice was not precisely followed by Menemism and would therefore not be strictly Peronist. However, despite the unexpected overcome, neoliberal policies such as the convertibility plan were indeed aimed at attaining social justice. The imposition of a fixed equal exchange rate between the local currency and the American dollar, along with the plummeting of inflation rates, was aimed at combatting inequality and restoring the purchasing power of the population. The objective was clearly social justice, despite the opposite results.

On the other hand, Mr. Kirchner's case also shared similarities. He indeed gave importance to authority. Although his speeches bared a national and popular connotation, his policies, as any good Peronist, were extremely personalistic. Main decisions were not discussed in the Congress but were made by the President in a clear sign of extremely presidential politics. Nothing new under the Peronist sun: a strong leader to control the crowds. Implementing social aid led to political affiliation. Social justice was a stronghold of Kirchnerism, just as with Peronism, but added some new ingredients such as the issue of human rights, being then named as "justice and human rights," in line with Mr. Kirchner's efforts to settle the debt with democracy after the last dictatorship. Therefore, social justice can be found in Néstor Kirchner's policies through the

implementation of social aid and human rights-centred policies, while Carlos Menem's social justice is based on fixing the Argentine economy to restore the purchase power to citizens.

### Economic Independence

The economic independence is associated to the relationship of Argentina with the world economic power. Here we will see how, despite the published speeches or the well noted purposes of the import substitution programme, Argentina never attained to replace its agro-exporter model, even after its close relationship with the hegemonies, the United States and its currency.

Mr. Menem's mandate is seen as the most "open" to the hegemonies, with his so called "carnal relationship" with the United States. Economic independence did not seem to be his top priority, but to move closer to the powers by means of extremely dependent policies and neoliberal tendencies.

However, this closeness and dependence to other countries, typically associated to the Menemist administration, may also be identified during other Peronist administrations, even with Mr. Perón. The founder of the movement, despite his popular and nationalist speeches, signed an oil agreement with the American company California Oil<sup>73</sup>. Moreover, the Western approach of Peronism translated as a constant focus on the West in terms of international relations. Another clear example is the TIAR agreement (Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance) that Argentina signed in 1947.

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<sup>73</sup> "Standard Oil de California" – Peron in 1955 signed an agreement with a Company (California Argentina de Petroleo SA) that was managed by the American Standard Oil de California. Already in 1947 Peron signed an agreement between YPF (Yacimientos Petroliferos Fiscales) and the American Drilexco (Drilling and Explorations Company). At that time the YPF was still national.

Kirchnerism, on the other hand, had a “mature relationship” with the United States. The dependency from the American currency was still present, even with the debt the country faced. During Mr. Kirchner’s administration, American President George Bush was invited to Argentina as any other commercial partner. It is true that he closed the imports to Argentina in an attempt to replicate Juan Perón’s import substitution plan, but the real intention behind this was to develop the national economy. Far from ending relations with the rest of the globe, Néstor Kirchner gained China as a new trade partner and opened the doors to Chinese imports.

### Political Sovereignty

Contrary to common belief, the Peronist political sovereignty is closer to the Menemist idea of the issue rather than the Kirchnerist. The South American bloc Mercosur was established during Mr. Menem’s mandate in the 90s and enforced during Mr. Kirchner’s in the 2000s. The attempt of finding Argentina’s role in the international context was present in Mr. Perón’s administration, and in his Peronist successors’ as well. However, their approaches were definitely different.

President Menem thought of Mercosur as a tool to place Argentina at the international level. His approach prioritised the country’s economic development rather than the regional development. However, this was the general attitude of the 90s in the region. Paraguay and Chile, just as Argentina, were restoring democracy after long dictatorial regimes. This was definitely not the best moment to think of pluralism.

On the contrary, Mr. Kirchner’s approach centred in Latin America. His goal was to place the region at the international level, fostering unity between Latin American countries. As part of the so-called “pink wave,” political tendencies in the region followed the same direction, paving the way to multilateral cooperation. Political sovereignty, now under the name of “sovereignty and

identity,” promoted equality between member countries, rejecting feelings of superiority. Brazil had stopped being, for the first time, a competitor in terms of leadership, to become a trustworthy commercial partner.

“Nuestra prioridad en política exterior será la construcción de una América Latina políticamente estable, próspera, unida, con bases en los ideales de democracia y de justicia social. (...) Mercosur y la integración latinoamericana deben ser parte de un verdadero proyecto político regional.”<sup>74</sup> (Kirchner 2003)

In view of the above, we can conclude that a historical moment may determine the differences in relations between the Latin American countries and, therefore, the international role of Argentina. (De Simone 2004)

The three Peronist banners are presented as goals to be achieved by any Peronist administration. The most important characteristic of these administrations is the ability to adapt policies to reality. The movement from the left to the right wing is a characterising feature of Peronism. This swing would work as long as a prominent leader is in charge, as was the case of Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner. As a highly personalistic movement, the President is a key figure to ensure its success. This explains the difficulty of defining Peronism and identifying such administrations, as it requires a thorough and dynamic analysis.

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<sup>74</sup> English: “Our priority in foreign policy will be building a Latin America of political stability, prosperity, unity, with its bases on the ideals of democracy and social justice. (...) Mercosur and the Latin American integration must be part of a true regional and political project.” Néstor Kirchner’s inauguration speech, 2003.

### 4.3 Constants in Argentine Foreign Policy

There were two authors that in the 1960s identified constants in the Argentine foreign policy independently from the administration, the president in office and the model of insertion into the international context: they were Gustavo Ferrari and Juan Carlos Puig.

Ferrari and Puig's theories resulted interesting, as Argentina has always seemed to have a shift in foreign policy according to the incumbent president's ideology, as former President Ms. Cristina Fernández de Kirchner expressed during her inauguration speech in 2007:

“Se trata entonces de poder sentar las bases de acumulación para que luego las elecciones democráticas que marca la Constitución no signifiquen que cada cuatro años los argentinos cambiamos de modelo económico y en una política pendular terminamos frustrando todo. Nadie puede vivir cada cuatro años cambiando absolutamente todo.”<sup>75</sup> (C.F. Kirchner 2007)

Therefore, despite the above declaration of 2007, some constants in the Argentine foreign policy may be found from 1860 to present. This section will firstly analyse how the past foreign policies were defined by Gustavo Ferrari and Juan Carlos Puig, which in the 1960s settled the “constants of the foreign policy.” Then, the focus will shift to the foreign policy we are concerned in: Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner's, trying to find the constants and, if so, whether they are the same as Ferrari and Puig's from 1960 (Paradiso 1996,15).

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<sup>75</sup> English: “It is a matter of being able to lay the foundations of accumulation so that after the democratic elections marked by the Constitution, it does not mean that every four years the Argentines change their economic model and in a pendular policy we end up frustrating everything. Nobody can live every four years changing absolutely everything.” Inauguration speech, first presidency of CFK, 2007.

According to Gustavo Ferrari and Juan Carlos Puig, the constants in the Argentine foreign policy were:

Gustavo Ferrari

- Pacifism
- Isolationism
- Evasión por medio del derecho
- Moralism
- Confrontation with the United States
- Europeanism
- Territorial dismemberment

Juan Carlos Puig

- Affiliation to the British sphere of influence
- Opposition to the United States
- Isolationism from Latin America
- Weak territorial policy<sup>76</sup>

There are some of these constants which are easy to recognise before Menemism and Kirchnerism. For example, pacifism was the position adopted by Argentina during the World Wars. Because of ideology and economic

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<sup>76</sup> (Eissa 2007)

reasons, Argentina did not take a clear position, applying the principle of no intervention.

This neutrality adopted by General Perón led to another constant: isolationism. This policy excluded Argentina from the Marshall Plan implemented by the United States in 1947 after its lack of involvement in the Second World War. The same happened with the Bretton Woods negotiations, where Argentina did not participate due to its Justicialist ideology, convinced that multilateral agreements only benefitted big countries. Isolationism is also recognisable during two dictatorial periods: The Infamous Decade in the 30s and the last dictatorship in 1976. The extreme nationalist stance adopted by the authoritarian regimes led to isolation, especially in the most recent one due to the violation of human rights with the disapproval from the United States with President J. Carter.

The relationship with the United States is another constant of the Argentine foreign policy. Ferrari's "Confrontation with the United States" constant was seen during the Malvinas War, when Argentina was not supported by hegemony, as it supported its old ally Great Britain. This constant is present in both authors as "Confrontation with the United States" and "Opposition to the United States." This negative definition of the relationship is curious, since despite nationalist presidential speeches, the US has been one of the main allies of Argentina. The dependency from the United States has also been a constant in Argentine foreign policy; this point will be analysed further on.

The relationship with the old hegemony, the United Kingdom, has been constant in terms of Ferrari's "Europeanism" and Puig's "Affiliation to the British sphere of influence." So has been with other European countries, mostly before the two World Wars. In fact, the European model had been the role model for Argentine administrations, something that changed after the First World War, when the weakness of Europe came into picture.

Focusing on the United Kingdom, examples of bilateral relations with Argentina may be found both before and after the World War. Argentina was vastly dependent from the then hegemony in the 1880s, and so was still after the war. The Roca-Runciman Treaty was a clear example of this, as it encouraged trade relations between the two countries, but deepening dependence as per conditions imposed by the European country.

Some constants shortlisted by Ferrari and Puig are easy to confirm. However, these lists were composed in the 60s, way before Menemism and Kirchnerism. Whether these constants should be updated after such significant Peronist movements will be subject of further analysis in this thesis.

For example, this thesis has previously explored the dependent relationships of Argentina with other prominent economies. In the case of the United Kingdom, this constant should definitely be amended, as it has shifted to the United States, one main current constant in Argentine foreign policy. Precisely during Mr. Menem's mandate, globalization proved the import substitution model wrong. The focus would then be to settle preferential relationships first with the US (as had earlier happened with the UK) and then with Latin American countries, with the Mercosur as a clear tool for commercial cooperation. Multilateralism became part of Mr. Kirchner's political agenda, with an updated, mature, and cooperative relationship in the case of the US.

“Partidarios hacia la política mundial de multilateralidad como somos, no debe esperarse de nosotros alineamientos automáticos sino relaciones serias, maduras y racionales que respeten las dignidades que los países tienen.”<sup>77</sup>  
(Kirchner 2003)

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<sup>77</sup> English: “Supporters to the global policy of multilateralism as we are, automatic alignment should not be expected from us, but serious, mature and rational relations that respect the dignity of the countries.” Néstor Kirchner's presidential inauguration speech, 2003.

Foreign Minister Rafael Bielsa affirmed that the new Argentine foreign policy rejected unilateralism, adhering to multilateral policies, and enforcing international institutions. Proof of this was, for example, gaining China as a new trade partner during Mr. Kirchner's administration.

Having a close relationship with the hegemony in power has definitely been a constant in Argentine foreign policy in the 20th and 21st centuries. However, despite bilateral relations marked by cooperation, Ferrari and Puig have named this constant as "Confrontation with the US" and "Opposition to the US."

By 1917, after the First World War, the United States became the main commercial partner of Argentina, representing 32.2% of Argentina's foreign trade. The allied countries (led by the United States) had become the exclusive commercial partners of Argentina for the export of cereals in 1918 (Sanchís Muñoz 2010, 212)..

During Mr. Peron's mandate, despite his public speech, he never ended economic relations, as the American capital was needed to achieve his commercial/ economic plan of Import Substitution Industrialization.

During Mr. Frondizi's presidency, in view of his developmentalist ideology, he wanted each single country to develop itself to then give rise to region-wise cooperation; the American capital was then fundamental. His integration and development plan was completely dependent from American dollars.

In 1961, with President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, the submission of Argentina to the United States became even clearer, even despite the Argentine President's attempt to prove otherwise.

Considering more recent policies of Néstor Kirchner and Carlos Menem, two constants in foreign policy may be identified the refounding vision and the attempt to place Argentina in the First World.

The “refounding vision” is based on the fact that every new president taking office considers the previous administration as disastrous. The new incumbent party does not continue any policy from the previous government but starts a new period. Actually, every president from the democratic period in Argentina (1983-) had adopted this vision. The goal at the beginning of a mandate was to introduce a new political storytelling. Just as Mr. Menem wanted to start a new era after Mr. Alfonsín with neoliberalism, at the same time Mr. Kirchner sought to break away with Mr. Menem’s neoliberalism, as described with this sentence: “Es la política la que arrastra a la economía y no al revés, como nos hicieron creer durante años”.<sup>78</sup> (Kirchner 2007)

The other constant is centres on the idea that Argentine presidents have had the vision to place Argentina in the international context and closer to the “big powers”. President Menem wanted to place the country in the first world by adopting a prominent role in the UN and a closer relationship with the United States, in line with world tendencies. He prioritised the global role over an autonomous development. Dependency from the prominent powers seemed to be the price to pay.

Néstor Kirchner also expressed his urge to find a significant international role, but in a more dignified way. He defined his platform as an “own model”, therefore a new model, different from the previous one. Kirchnerism arose thanks to two factors: the absence of an alternative model and the crisis of the capitalist model represented by the previous neoliberal administration. Actually, Kirchnerism as a model did not recognize precedents, it was considered unique and innovative (De Simone 2013, 219).

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<sup>78</sup> English: “It is politics that drags the economy and not the other way around, as we were made to believe for years.” Néstor Kirchner, 2007.

#### 4.4 Mauricio Macri: Argentine Foreign Policy in the Present

Analysing the foreign policy of Carlos Menem and Néstor Kirchner, some constants have been identified in Argentine foreign policy. In this section, however, the focus will be on the present, with President Mauricio Macri, to identify which of the constants are still present, if any. Whether the refounding vision, isolationism, the relationship with the United States, etc. are part of Mr. Macri's administration will be the main subject of this section. This is with the aim to highlight how, despite the political side in office, foreign policies of Argentina have some continuities. Comparing Mr. Macri's foreign policies between Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner ones would be an additional analysis for the policies of these two Peronist presidents. A different point of view based on the comparison with the present.

A constant in Argentine foreign policy, which is noticeable in President Macri's foreign policy, is the refounding vision, meaning he makes a big distinction from his predecessors. As it happened with President Alfonsín, for example, he started a whole new era and hence "refounding" after the dictatorship; Mr. Macri has done the same. Not only is it a difference in ideology, but an attempt to renew Argentine politics with a new generation of politicians seeking to modify the negative issues from the previous administration. For example, modifying the importance of the Foreign Office to rebalance Argentina's relations with the rest of the world, disengaging with the foreign policy of the previous administration. (Pauselli 2015)

This refounding vision has come from a change in another constant: isolationism. Mr. Macri's foreign policy is based on the "back to the world" logic, rejecting the autonomy through distance but supporting autonomy through diversification. Diversification in the sense of relations with other countries, such as China, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, and having a mature

relationship with the United States, rejecting submission, and working together to find a solution for financial controversies in times of losses in international reserves while the Government seeks international sources of funding.

In addition to the refounding vision and isolationism, a broader focus is implemented in terms of international relations, not limiting to Venezuela and China, but opening completely to the world, giving key importance to Mercosur and proposing a new dialogue with Venezuela after its interruption. Then, Mr. Macri's vision on foreign policy is undoubtedly much more open in terms of possibilities for political, social, and economic cooperation with countries that would contribute to Argentina, with no submission nor confrontation. (Pauselli 2015)

Therefore, Mauricio Macri's foreign policy has had some continuities and some novelties in general. Since this thesis has studied the foreign policy of two presidents in particular, it will now seek similarities with Menemism and Kirchnerism.

Mr. Menem's presidency was characterised by his peripheral realism. When dealing with this phenomenon, it is necessary to understand the international context where it started. Peripheral realism is a theory based on President Menem's foreign policy (1989-1995), under a context of Cold War, globalization, capitalism, and democratisation processes. It conveys the idea that a less strategic, weak, and undeveloped country required a foreign policy centred on its citizens to achieve real results for its citizens.

Similarities may be found in this regard between Mr. Menem and Mr. Macri, but also differences. The first similarity with peripheral realism is the "openness to the world" approach, but with one difference: in the case of Menemism, foreign policy's priority is to develop Argentina in economic terms to then join the first world through internal policies such as the convertibility plan. In this

sense, the Macrist foreign policy is different— it is not focused on simply joining the first world but on collaborating with it at a commercial level, looking at countries like China, Australia, and New Zealand. (Pauselli 2015)

These differences may also be noted in terms of relations with the United States. Menemism aligned with the US, also in political terms, and recognised it as the hegemony. This is not present in Macrism, where establishing closer relations with the US is part of the foreign policy but rejects submission and seeks a mature relationship. (Pauselli 2015)

Other similarities are present in the Latin American front; Mr. Menem signed the Treaty of Asunción and Mr. Macri continues giving importance to the integration of Mercosur, especially due to the advantages this would provide, facing other models of integration as the European. In view of the above, ending with isolationism is definitely a similarity between peripheral realism and Mr. Macri's foreign policy.

Despite being from opposite parties, Mr. Kirchner and Mr. Macri share some similarities in foreign policy, besides clear discrepancies. Néstor Kirchner based its foreign policy on his updated version of the Peronist banners. "Economy and Development" was the Government's objective of increasing foreign trade and, therefore, exports. His Government clearly based on drifting away from the external world. Blocking imports and seeking economic independence did not mean blocking exports, international trade or relations with other countries. This is, in a way, what Mr. Macri has been doing: introducing Argentina into international trade, probably in a different way from Mr. Kirchner, but with the same objective of reinserting Argentina to the world in a decent way.

This universalism combines two policies and an example of relations with Russia, started by Mr. Kirchner and followed by Mr. Macri. Another banner of Kirchnerism is "Sovereignty and Identity." Following this logic, Argentina does

not consider itself as superior from its neighbours, seeing Brazil, for example, as a long-term partner instead of a threat to leadership. Therefore, Mr. Kirchner's priority is the building of a united and politically stable Latin America, fully in favour of taking part in a plan of economic integration as Mercosur. The openness of Mercosur is followed by President Macri, being in favour of regional integration.

Another continuity from the current President is the importance given to multilateralism and international organisations, something started by the Kirchners and followed by Mr. Macri with, for example, the WTO Summit.

The relationship with the United States is definitely another constant. The Kirchnerist administration had good relations with the North American country but was not automatically aligned. This meant ending with the Menemist submission to the hegemony and being close to it in a mature manner protecting the Argentine interests. The main difference, however, is that Kirchnerism implemented a selective foreign policy, prioritising relations with countries of similar ideology, as China and Venezuela. Kirchnerism did sign agreements with the US and did limit relations for imports, but never limited commercial relations for exports, which meant not closing relations with the country as it had happened before. It is therefore clear that having relations with the United States, despite some discrepancies, is a constant in all three administrations.

Besides the already mentioned constants, the following three are the most representative ones and essential to fully understand the foreign policy of Mauricio Macri:

- The relationship with the United States
- The Government focus on import/export levels and the role of Argentina at the international level with the agro-export model.
- The crisis, the public debt and the inflation rate

The above three topics are completely connected with each other. In fact, we will see how the crisis being faced by Argentina due to the high public debt has obliged the Government to increase export duties and approach to the United States through an agreement with the IMF.<sup>79</sup>

When Mauricio Macri took office on 10th December 2015, public debt was about 240 million dollars, representing 53% of national GDP.<sup>80</sup> This figure was inherited from the Kirchnerist administrations, so one of the goals of President Macri was to solve the crisis with a gradualist model. Gradualism means addressing an issue avoiding sudden reforms and implementing slow-impact policies, step by step.

One of the reforms enforced by Macrism was the increase of export duties; the terms will be subject of further analysis. However, it is important to be aware of that this was also adopted by his predecessor Cristina Fernández de Kirchner on 11 March 2008 with Resolution 125.<sup>81</sup> Signed by CFK and Chief of Staff Alberto Fernández, this resolution meant a variable value of export duties to the value of soy in dollars. For example, if the price of soy in Chicago were lower than USD 200 per ton, the tax would be zero, but if the value were USD 400/ton or USD 600/ton, the relevant tax would be 35.75% and 49.33% respectively.

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<sup>79</sup> International Monetary Fund (IMF), founded on 22 July 1944 in Bretton Woods by the representatives of 44 countries. Argentina was not included in an attempt by President Farrell to end relations with the hegemony. The fund started operations on 27 December 1945 in New York with only 29 member countries. Argentina joined the IMF in 1956.

<sup>80</sup> Diario Popular, “The Evolution of Argentina’s Debt in the Last 15 Years,” 9 May 2018. <http://bit.ly/2GbZuf0>

<sup>81</sup> Perfil, “Resolution 125: Cristina Kirchner’s Strongest Conflict in Eight Years of Government,” 17 July 2018. <http://bit.ly/2DKeYFp>

The Government would then keep half of the value of agriproducts with this tax.<sup>82</sup>

This was obviously not well-accepted by agricultural producers, and the promise to not increase the tax on agricultural exports was one of the main pledges of Mr. Macri's electoral campaign. However, the situation is different now. He had pledged to support farmers, in contrast with implemented taxes on agriculture during the Kirchnerist period. After taking office, Mauricio Macri lowered export duties on agriproducts to foster international trade. However, he was not able to continue implementing this policy considering that the agricultural sector is the higher tax contributor in the country, translating into the increase of duties on agriculture once more.

“Hasta el 31 de diciembre de 2020, regirá un derecho del 12% a la exportación para consumo de todas las mercaderías con los límites máximos de \$4 para los productos primarios y de \$3 para los elaborados.”<sup>83</sup>

In view of this, the export model has continued to be in force, confirming once more Argentina's international role and the agro-export model. The export both the agro and the manufactured, are the strength of Argentina, and where actually the government get value – taxation.

Argentina was and is one of the biggest exporters of soy. In this last period, due to a deep drought, Argentina was in need to import soy, something quite curious. This takes us to another constant of the Argentine foreign policy: The relationship with the United States. Argentina then imported soy from the

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<sup>82</sup> Ibidem

<sup>83</sup> English: “Until 31 December 2020, there will be a 12% duty on the export for consumption of all goods, with maximum limits of \$4 for primary products and \$3 for elaborated products.” iProfesional, “It's Official: 12% Deduction on All Exports,” 4 September 2018. <http://bit.ly/2RqGVpp>

United States, something that had not happened for 20 years. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Argentina imported 1.3 million metric tonnes in just three months.<sup>84</sup>

Argentina also signed an agreement for the import of pork, translating in 10 million-dollar worth imports per year. The entry of pork to the country had been blocked in 1992, during Mr. Menem's presidency. According to the USDA, this "reform" would mean the beginning of a stiff competition between the imported products and the domestic production of Argentina. Just to have an idea, the United States is the biggest exporter of pork in the world, exporting a total of 6,500 million dollars per year. This represents 27% of the total production of the country.<sup>85</sup>

For international cooperation, it seems impossible for Argentina to avoid the United States. Mr. Menem had had a "carnal" relationship with the US, whereas Mr. Kirchner had a decent relationship despite his public speeches clearly against the hegemony. Mr. Macri needed to open the doors to the world, as it was necessary considering the economic situation he faced when taking office.

The above-mentioned agreements seem to be related to the fact that on 3 September 2018, President Macri confirmed the "emergency situation" of the country and presented an agreement with the IMF as the only solution. In May 2018, he had already admitted to have started negotiations with the international agency in seek of financial aid worth 50 billion dollars.

On 7 June 2018, the IMF announced to have approved the above-mentioned loan, immediately confirmed in Argentina by Finance Minister Nicolás Dujovne

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<sup>84</sup> El Día, "Argentina is the 1st Buyer of Soy from the US", 2 December 2018. <http://bit.ly/2TpmAm4>

<sup>85</sup> El Destape, "Argentina Approved the Import of Pork from the US after 26 Years," 13 April 2018. <http://bit.ly/2sYibLk>.

and President of the Central Bank Federico Sturzenegger during an official conference at the Kirchner Cultural Centre in Buenos Aires. The agreement was then updated in September for a total amount of 57.1 billion dollars, consisting of a 36-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA), an economic programme of the IMF for member states in need of financial assistance, usually after a financial crisis.

In addition to the increase of the total loan, there were also other changes from the previous agreement signed in June. The loan passed from being worth 6 billion dollars to be 13.4 billion dollars, and the next wave of the loan passed from being 11.4 billion dollars to 22.8 billion.<sup>86</sup> A significant increment.

The new agreement with the IMF was announced by Minister of Finance Dujovne and IMF Director General Christine Lagarde in New York during the visit of President Macri in the USA due to the annual meeting of the United Nations.

To understand the reason for Macri to declare an emergency in September 2018 with the further agreement with the IMF we must see the public debt figures. The public debt increased from 240.66 billion dollars in 2015 to 31.5 billion in 2017.<sup>87</sup> In terms of GDP percentage, when Mr. Macri assumed the presidency, the public debt was 53% of the GDP, and approximately 93% of the GDP by the end of 2018.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> iProfesional, "The 10 Keys to the New Agreement of Argentina with the IMF," 26 September 2018. <http://bit.ly/2CWautT>

<sup>87</sup> Popular, "The Evolution of the Argentine Debt in the Last 15 Years," 9 May 2018. <http://bit.ly/2CTxrOn>

<sup>88</sup> iProfesional, "Argentina is the Country with the Highest Public Debt in the Region," 13 November 2018. <http://bit.ly/2BfrDP3>

This is also the reason given by the Minister of Finance, N. Dujovne, that at the beginning of the negotiation in May 2018 confirmed that “El gobierno decidió acudir al FMI en forma preventiva para evitar una crisis.”<sup>89</sup> At the beginning of the negotiations, it was clear that Argentina was facing a stiff moment in economic terms and this was the reason why they decided to become closer to the United States, again.

In conclusion, the current situation of Argentina consists of dependence in financial and exporting terms. Argentina has a huge open public debt and clearly needs the cooperation of other countries to face this situation. The last agreement with the IMF is a clear example. By analysing the last agreement that Argentina signed with the United States in import-export terms, it seems that Argentina’s behaviour of opening its market to the import from the USA could be *captatio benevolentiae* in order to facilitate their negotiations with the IMF. This can be a theme of long discussion, but in any case, the current international status of Argentina is undoubtedly of dependence.

This chapter has clarified the concept of “populism” and the populist perspective of Peronism. Populist movements easily arise in crises, when a strong leader is needed to manage the situation.<sup>90</sup> This characteristic is precisely what Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner had in common. By using the three banners as parameters, it is clear that the three banners are goals that each Peronist president seeks to achieve, regardless the methods. Argentine foreign policy presented some constants that characterize the country’s international role. One of the main constants seems to be its international role as the biggest agro exporter, and Argentina’s dependent relationship with the United States,

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<sup>89</sup> English: “The Government decided to approach to the IMF in a preventive way to avoid a crisis.” Ministry of the Treasury Nicolás Dujovne, May 2018.

<sup>90</sup> Zanatta, 2004.

confirmed even by the most recent foreign policies implemented by current President Mauricio Macri.

## Conclusions

As assessed hitherto, this thesis is an analysis of the central aspects of the Argentine foreign policy during the administrations of presidents Carlos Menem and Néstor Kircher. Its purpose is to comprehend the role adopted by Argentina at the international level and the influence of both presidents, considering their implemented policies and their political movement: Peronism.

The role of Argentina in the international context was (and is) influenced by two tendencies: autonomism or dependence from the hegemony, both in terms of insertion and in terms of relations with the other countries.

The fact that the two presidents who have been the subject of study in this foreign policy analysis belonged to the Peronist movement is key to comprehend the phenomenon in question. It may be seen that Menemist and Kirchnerist policies are sometimes closer or further from Perón's Peronism depending on the case. Defining Peronism poses a challenge; using the three banners of Peronism as parameters seems to be one the most effective ways to assess the movement, as explored in this thesis. Some features in Peronist presidents help to recognise them as such.

Precisely, a Peronist leader not only does he rule the state, but also the population. This thesis has explored how Peronist presidents have a strong capacity to adapt their policies to the situation they encountered when taking office. They adapt their administrations to reality. Peronism is a dynamic movement, and this very dynamism keeps its credibility only when there is a strong leader who is able to manage the situation. They keep the three banners of General Perón as common "goals" but, at the same time, they use different means to reach them. An example is the "social justice" that for Mr. Menem was achievable by lowering inflation rates and restoring purchasing power to the people; while for Mr. Kirchner, social justice was achievable by providing

social aid. The goal was the same, the means to reach it was not. This is the dynamism of Peronism. As a highly personalist movement, the President is a key figure to ensure its success.

To better understand the complex political situation of Argentina, this thesis used Ostiguy's article "The high and the low in politics: a two-dimensional political space for comparative analysis and electoral studies" as reference. This article explained how "high" and "low" classifications may be found more suitable in order to understand the changing political situations in Argentina (and in South America), filling the gap which the traditional left-right analysis fails to explain. The result is that the "low" section seems to perfectly define populism. In his article, P. Ostiguy defines the low as the explanation of Peronism, and the high as the definition of anti-Peronism, simplifying the Argentine political context.

"Peronism overtime is best described as politically on the low and anti-Peronism has presented itself as being politically on the high" (Ostiguy 2009).

This article was essential in order to explain how dynamic Peronism is, and that Mr. Menem and Mr. Kirchner could define themselves both as Peronist. The "low" theory is extremely important also to define the role of Argentina in the global scenario. In fact, the "low-left" or "low-right" tendencies are also connected with the "autonomist" or "dependence" policies. A low-left foreign policy may be identified as autonomist, more nationalist and not completely submitted to the huge powers around the world as the United States. Instead, governments that are closer to the hegemonies have been defined as low-right and dependent.

This is a key concept for the purpose of this thesis. It seems clear that Menem and Kirchner's foreign policies assumed two different positions, one of dependency and the other of autonomism. As explained by Simonoff, these two

tendencies are differentiated by the election of the main country partner (Simonoff 2010, 10). Autonomous policies choose as main partner similar countries with similar characteristics, being able to face the global economy, instead of submitting to the main global powers. On the contrary, dependent policies stay closer to the hegemonies, as the United States in Argentina's case.

This is precisely what happened with Menemism and its "*amor carnal*" with the United States, as well as Kirchnerism with its integration and close relationship with the Latin American region, mainly with countries like Venezuela. The above concepts are clear and, in some way, proved by the facts, but at the same time, they need an implementation in order to better represent the real situation of foreign policy in Argentina, in the past as well as in the present.

Let's focus on Russell's words:

"Desde los noventa ya no importa quien gobierne, el camino a seguir con respecto a Estados Unidos será el mismo."<sup>91</sup> (Russel 1998)

Therefore, despite the differentiation between autonomism and dependence, it seems that the relationship of Argentina with the United States as the most important partner in terms of foreign policies is a constant, regardless the political affiliation of the President in office.

As previously assessed during Carlos Menem's mandate, this close relationship was clear and well declared. Both for external factors, as the wave of globalization, and internal factors, as the economic crisis. Carlos Menem was able to change the political tendency of the country and to establish a neoliberal programme deeply influenced by the "carnal" relation with the United States. His peripheral realism was based on the acceptance of the American power.

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<sup>91</sup> English: "Since the 90s, it has not matter who rules, the path to take with respect to the United States will be the same." Russel, 1998. In Simonoff 2010, 11.

President Menem was aware of the old relationship that Argentina had with Great Britain (as previous hegemony) and this memory kept the government's belief that cooperation with a hegemony is the key to be present in the international context.

Regardless the outcome of these policies (whether Argentina solved its economic crisis or not), the focus on the means to reach this purpose is our main concern. And this means was a dependent relationship with the United States. Depended mostly in financial terms due to the convertibility plan that made Argentina depend from the entrance of American dollars in the country.

In the case of Néstor Kirchner's mandate, the situation is a bit different. Presidential speeches expressed his intent to become independent from the United States. However, the strong relationship with the "big" country established in the 90s by the neoliberals seemed difficult to dissolve. The model that Kirchnerism established in order to restore the credibility towards the political class after the 2001 crisis was named "modelo propio" ("own model"), establishing a clear difference with previous neoliberal politics. In some way, foreign policies were different, mostly in terms of regional integration and relationship with Latin America countries. Therefore, this is in tune with the concept previously assessed on "low-left."

But at the same time, it is important to say that the carnal love towards the United States had transformed as a "mature relationship," drawing a thin line that separated the "autonomous" purpose of his speech from the wish to sustain relations with the United States. Thus, Néstor Kirchner always maintained the relationship with the United States, in diverse ways and for various reasons.

The external debt was one of the main reasons. Argentina needed the cooperation of the United States to face the exorbitant debt, something that the country would not have been able to face with the sole help of Latin American

countries. At the same time, due to the crisis, Argentina was becoming less relevant in the international context and was in need of a strong partner to restore its reputation. This being said, it is now even more clear that the close relationship with the hegemony in power is undoubtedly a constant in the Argentine foreign policy.

The role of Argentina in the global sphere was defined by its agro-export model as the exporter of agricultural raw material, what actually created the great dependence of Argentina to foreign capital and blocked its independence from the importation of manufactured goods. Therefore, the agro-export model is the dominant model in Argentina, the only one that has always worked. Precisely this model required a partner country to invest in the Argentine economy and this has been the base for dependence.

Therefore, there are some factors, mainly financial, that made Argentina dependent from the other countries' investments, mainly the United States regardless the political ideology in power (Gardini 2009). This very situation is confirmed by the current policies of Argentina with Mauricio Macri as incumbent president. The crisis that Argentina is facing due to the excessive debt obliged the government to increase export duties on the one hand, and at the same time to sign an agreement with the IMF. Two constants come then into picture: The agro-export model as the highest source of funds for the tax authorities in Argentina, and the needed relationship with the United States (as a leader for the IMF) in order to face the economic crisis.

Therefore, the "circle is closed." Everything matches. The agro-exporter model is still valid and is one of the main financial entries for Argentina, as well as the undeniable relationship with the United States, regardless the political ideology in power.

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