

**ARGENTINA'S DOUBLE POLITICAL SPECTRUM:
PARTY SYSTEM, POLITICAL IDENTITIES, AND STRATEGIES, 1944–2007**

Pierre Ostiguy

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Pierre Ostiguy, an assistant professor of political studies at Bard College, specializes in Latin American politics. He studies party systems, populism, political appeals, and political identity, with empirical research on Peronism and anti-Peronism in Argentina, and Chavismo and anti-Chavismo in Venezuela. Ostiguy's work develops a "spatial analysis" of politics and party systems focusing on the appeals of parties and candidates (as well as their reception) rather than policies and issues alone. His articles have appeared in French, English, and Spanish in *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*, *Politique et Sociétés*, *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, and the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, among other journals. He authored *Los Capitanes de la industria: Grandes empresarios, política y economía en las Argentina de los años 80* (Legasa, 1990), as well as a recent book chapter on Argentine identities and Peronist political culture. He is currently completing a book entitled "Party Systems and Political Appeals: Populism and Anti-Populism in Argentina," to be published by the University of Notre Dame Press. Ostiguy served as chair of Bard's Latin American and Iberian Studies program and was a visiting fellow at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies. He received his PhD from the University of California at Berkeley.

ABSTRACT

The paper demonstrates that the Argentine political arena or “party system” is, has been, and continues to be structured as a two-dimensional space, and more precisely, at least from 1945 to 2002, as a double political spectrum. This structure for party or leaders’ competition has resisted and outlasted many regime changes, economic calamities, and institutionally short-lived political actors. In fact, positions in the two-dimensional Argentine political space are far more stable than the partisan institutions themselves; a position abandoned within it leads to the creation of a new partisan actor to fill it. The dimension orthogonal to the left-right axis, itself very present in Argentina, is clearly rooted in the social, political, political-cultural, and sociocultural cleavage between Peronism and the forces opposed to it, or “anti-Peronism.” Both Peronism and anti-Peronism, moreover, *fully* range from left to right, thus creating a double political spectrum in Argentina. This main cleavage, in addition, has been notoriously difficult to characterize ideologically and politically, also complicating the comparative analysis of party systems. A key goal of this paper is to show that it is best understood—in a more general way—as being a conflict and contrast between the “high” and the “low” (Ostiguy 2009) in politics.

This paper combines spatial analysis (including political mapping) with the qualitative historical analysis it often lacks. The paper examines both political appeals and their electoral reception—thus taking into account observable political discourse and differentiated practices as well as more conventional political sociology of voting. The paper moreover provides an original account, based on appeals and rapidly shifting “axes of differentiation” in politics, of the creation of what then congealed as the cleavage between Peronism and anti-Peronism. Overall, the paper constitutes a thorough analysis of party systems, political identities, and electoral strategies from 1944 up to 2007 in Argentina within a resilient, structured political space. It is also, as such, an analysis of Peronism and its opposite.

RESUMEN

Este artículo demuestra que la arena política o el “sistema de partidos” argentino es, fue y continúa siendo estructurado como un espacio bi-dimensional y más precisamente, por lo menos desde 1945 hasta el 2002, como un doble espectro político. Esta estructura para la competencia partidaria o entre líderes ha resistido y sobrevivido a varios cambios de régimen, calamidades económicas y actores políticos sin duración institucional. En realidad, las posiciones en el espacio político bi-dimensional argentino son mucho más estables que las mismas instituciones partidarias; una posición abandonada dentro de él lleva a la creación de un nuevo actor partidario para llenarla. La dimensión perpendicular al eje izquierda-derecha, a su vez muy presente en la Argentina, está claramente arraigada en el clivaje social, político, político-cultural y sociocultural entre el Peronismo y las fuerzas opuestas a éste, o “anti-Peronismo.” Tanto el Peronismo como el anti-Peronismo, además, se extienden *plenamente* desde la izquierda hasta la derecha, creando así un doble espectro político en la Argentina. Ese clivaje principal, por

lo demás, ha sido notoriamente difícil de caracterizar ideológica y políticamente, complicando también el análisis comparado de los sistemas de partidos. Un propósito clave de este artículo es mostrar que esa división se debe entender—de modo más general—como un conflicto y contraste entre lo “alto” y lo “bajo” (Ostiguy 2009) en política.

El artículo combina de modo original el análisis espacial (incluso como cartografía política) y el análisis histórico cualitativo que muchas veces le hace falta. El artículo examina tanto las interpelaciones políticas como su recepción electoral, tomando en cuenta por lo tanto el discurso político y las prácticas diferenciadas así como la más convencional sociología del voto. El artículo provee además una explicación original, basada en interpelaciones y “ejes de diferenciación” que fueron cambiando rápidamente, del surgimiento de lo que se solidificó como el clivaje entre Peronismo y anti-Peronismo. Con todo, el artículo constituye un análisis completo de los sistemas de partidos, identidades políticas y estrategias electorales en la Argentina, desde 1944 hasta el 2007, dentro de un espacio político estructurado y perdurable. También es, en sí, un análisis del Peronismo y de su opuesto, el anti-Peronismo.

During the entire second half of the twentieth century, a notable feature of Argentine politics has been the stability of the main political cleavage that structures its party system. This endurance is especially remarkable given the country's otherwise extremely unstable history: in the last half-century, Argentina has had four military coups, two bureaucratic-authoritarian regimes, two different populist experiments, two episodes of restricted liberal democracy with a major political party banned, and full liberal democracy. Nor was Argentina's political instability and unpredictability limited to its changing regime types: there was severe left-right polarization in the 1970s, but also left-right political coalitions in the 1940s, as well as in 1999–2001 under the Alianza (Alliance). The economy, often said to have a major impact on politics, was equally fitful: Argentina's economy imploded in late 2001 to 2002, the country went through an episode of hyper-inflation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the currency was changed four times in two decades, and the country suffered a drastic recession in 1981–82. Despite all of this instability and lack of pattern—and, some would say, as a partial cause of it—the main political cleavage that defines the Argentine party system and more precisely, Argentina's structured political space, has remained the same, that is, the one between Peronism and the political forces opposing Peronism-in-power, i.e., anti-Peronism.

Yet in spite its resilience, this cleavage has been notoriously difficult to characterize politically, not to say ideologically. We know that, socially, this cleavage is to a large extent class based.¹ Empirically, educational level is a statistically remarkable predictor of voters' preferences across this cleavage.² But these social characteristics of the cleavage do not indicate what the cleavage is politically, in contrast to socially. The electoral coalition that brought Perón to power in 1946, for example, included the newly formed left-of-center Labor Party as well as right-wing nationalists. The forces opposing Perón, calling themselves the Democratic Union, ranged from Communists and Socialists, to Radicales (Radicals), to conservative business sectors.

Politically, Peronism has been regarded by well-established scholars, such as Torcuato Di Tella, as an eternally proto social-democratic or Labor party, because it is massively and clearly supported by the unions and the working class, and because, with varying intensity, it has historically favored redistributionist socioeconomic policies.³

With perhaps equal justification, Peronism has been regarded by other renowned scholars of a somewhat older generation, who lived during Peronism's initial decade in power, as a local variation on, and failed attempt at, a fascist movement (e.g., Halperín 1995 [1956]: 53–54; J. L. Romero 1963 [1946]: 238, 244–254).⁴ Peronism's mobilizational, leader-oriented, nationalist, and somewhat authoritarian character,⁵ its modern use of the state for propagandistic purposes, and Perón's initial pro-Axis and then long-lasting Franco sympathies are all emphasized in this view. Certainly, Perón did choose Franco's Spain for his exile (after a stay with Trujillo) and never hid his admiration for Il Duce. In his seminal work *Political Man*, Seymour Martin Lipset attempted to reconcile these two apparently contradictory perspectives, hailing "the phenomenon known as Peronism" as the "fascism of the lower class" (1981: 173–76).⁶ This ingenious resolution, however, obscures more than it helps.

As if this were not sufficient, in ideological terms Peronism has been sequentially characterized as fascism, laborism, corporatism, revolutionary socialism (in the 1970s), national-populism, social-Christian (Perón),⁷ social democracy (Di Tella),⁸ neoliberalism (in the 1990s), according to Halperín and other commentators,⁹ popular conservatism, and under the early government of Nestor Kirchner, progressive!

We *can*, however, find order in what appears politically rather confusing and shifting. First, although left and right *are* highly relevant in Argentine politics and within Argentina's party system or political space, the main political cleavage in Argentina is most definitely not defined in left-right terms. Indeed, both Peronism and the various anti-Peronist forces have *fully ranged* across the left-right spectrum. In other words, to a large extent the Peronism/anti-Peronism political cleavage has historically crosscut the left-right axis. On the anti-Peronist side in Argentina, there is and has been an important socialist left, dominant among intellectuals, centrist Radicales, and, historically, a pro-US and pro-market economics right. The same full-blown left-right scale historically existed *within* Peronism. Left-right polarization within Peronism reached extremes in the 1970s, tearing the country apart, when the Peronist left, the Peronist unions center, and the Peronist far-right all engaged in armed activities against one another. In the late 1960s, even Perón, while in exile and hosted by Franco, praised Che Guevara¹⁰ and is said to have referred to Mao as "this little Chinese man who steals my ideas."¹¹ Possibly with

dark humor, he repeatedly praised a national form of socialism, against capitalist exploitation and US or Soviet imperialism.

In this paper I show that Argentina's politics and its party system (or more broadly, its political space) are structured as a double political spectrum (Figure 1). In other words, there are two parallel spectra, each ranging from left to right, structuring the Argentine political space. This raises the important question of the nature of the dimension orthogonal to the left-right scale, as we need concepts more generic and substantive than "Peronism" and "anti-Peronism" and similarly want crisp political categories that travel. In a recent Kellogg Working Paper (Ostiguy 2009), I conceptually introduced and comparatively discussed the key concepts of high and low in politics. That paper provides indispensable groundwork for the present paper on Argentina. High and low together constitute a dimension, and a scale, in politics. The high-low axis is, at the same time, fully neutral with regard to the left-right spectrum or axis—a quality that is relatively rare. These two orthogonal political dimensions, i.e., the classical left-right axis and the high-low dimension, together make up a very useful two-dimensional political space, which is structured in Argentina as a double political spectrum. The structure of Argentina's political space has proven surprisingly enduring, *outlasting* the institutional life of many actors—whether political parties or political leaders—which have appeared and disappeared in Argentina's politics.¹² This mapping and spatial political framework also accounts for the fact that left-right differences *within* parties in Argentina are often greater than those between parties, and it explains why different parties or party factions that are actually quite similar in their left-right positions often differ so substantially both in their choice of political alliances and in their social bases. This two-dimensional space of appeals in politics is thus particularly useful for understanding political positioning and the *social reception* of various politicians.

Moreover, as we will see, this two-dimensional political framework and the related double political spectrum provide an alternative and empirically sound explanation for the electoral viability of the neoliberal Menem government. There is a noticeable paradox in the fact that a neoliberal government was mainly supported, electorally, by the working and lower classes, while it was at the same time largely opposed, electorally, by the middle and upper-middle classes. This paper documents this

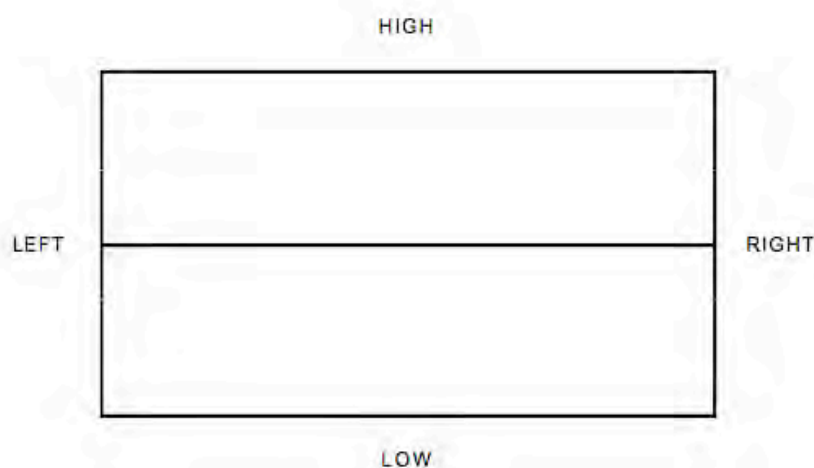
apparent anomaly and explains it logically as well as empirically. The two-dimensional framework also explains the vicissitudes of the anti-Menem opposition from the left-of-center Frente Grande (Broad Front, or FG) to the Alianza, the initial “transversal” efforts of Nestor Kirchner, and his “retreating” in late 2007 to Peronism.

Precisely because Argentina’s political space and party system are structured as a double political spectrum, it has been relatively easy and frequent for the Peronist party (Justicialist Party, or Partido Justicialista, PJ) leadership and the main anti-Peronist parties to *leapfrog* one another along the left-right axis, without fundamentally altering the party system. From 1983 to 1988, the Radical President Raúl Alfonsín moved slowly but very consistently to the right¹³ (culminating with his choice of Eduardo Angeloz for president), while, during that very same period, Peronism moved, inversely, from a situation that can only be described as rather chaotic along the *left-right* axis in 1983–84 to a position of center-left opposition—with Antonio Cafiero, the “15,” and Carlos Menem in 1987–88. In the 1990s, Menem had moved sharply to the right of the political spectrum, while Alfonsín, in the 1990s, moved to the left. As if that were not sufficient, during and after the 1999 election, the new leader of the Peronist party, Eduardo Duhalde (vice-president of the neoliberal Menem), located himself to the center-left of the new Radical leader and then president of the country, Fernando de la Rúa, and of his administration.¹⁴ In 2002, the Peronist party again spread from left to right, from Nestor Kirchner and arguably Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, left of center, to José Manuel de la Sota, up to Carlos Menem much on the right. On the political high, the forced movement toward the right of the left-of-center Frente País Solidario (Front for a Country in Solidarity, or FREPASO) as a junior partner of the right-wing de la Rúa government, was very costly for its institutional existence. The same political space it labored hard to occupy and unify institutionally, however, has by no mean “disappeared” but was instead been taken up by the political newcomer Elisa Carrió and her Alternativa por una República de Iguales (Alternative for a Republic of Equals, or ARI). Few actors, however, have dared to cross the high-low divide or, moreover, to join in an alliance of the extreme low with the extreme high (allied on the basis of similar left-right positions). By contrast, ranging across the opposites of the left-right dimension, Ricardo López Murphy and Domingo Cavallo, clearly on the right, and the Socialists, on the left, were

part of the same government. Similarly, in the 1980s, Jorge Triaca on the low-right, and Revolutionary Peronism on the low-left, were even part of the same “party.”¹⁵ In Argentina, parties do not leapfrog each other and do stay within delimited political areas, as observed on other continents (Adams 2001:122), but they do so mainly *along the high-low dimension* in politics, which is also and at the same time the country’s central cleavage.¹⁶

Figure 1

The Argentine Political Space:
A Double Political Spectrum



The paper shows and explains in empirical detail how Argentina’s politics is very clearly structured as a double political spectrum. It then analyzes how the structuring of its political space came into existence, in its contemporary form, in the 1940s. To that end, it employs the fundamental concepts presented and defined in Ostiguy (2009). As I show in this paper, the fact that the left-right and high-low dimensions are *each* made up of two, closely related subdimensions opened up possibilities for incremental but swift

redefinitions of the axis of political competition in Argentina. Actors' dynamic exploitation of those possibilities from 1943 to 1946 led to the eventual freezing of the Peronist/anti-Peronist political divide in high-low, rather than left-right, terms. Once consolidated, this double political spectrum in Argentina has remained remarkably durable over the decades, from the 1960s to the present. While Chilean politics, for example, has been largely structured along a left-right spectrum (with the secular-religious difference perhaps being a secondary dimension), Argentine politics has been and continues to be structured politically by the high-low cleavage, with the orthogonal left-right dimension playing an important but comparatively somewhat secondary role.

The central contribution of this paper is to lay out the structure of Argentina's political space. In doing so, using our basic structure the paper also dynamically explains, empirically, what may be called the paradox of Menemism, alluded to above. It also helps to account for the differentiated social reception that Menemism and the political opposition to it each received in Argentine society. It also explains the "continuity in difference," in the 2000s.

The present two-dimensional framework and the double political spectrum, first conceived in an admittedly more rudimentary way by the author as a student back in the mid-1980s, seems as vital today (2000, 2009)¹⁷ as it was more than two decades ago, despite the many and drastic changes of *institutional actors* that have occurred in the Argentine political arena. It now also seems altogether likely that this double political spectrum and more broadly this structured two-dimensional space will have a few more decades of continuing existence.

HIGH AND LOW IN ARGENTINE POLITICS AND ARGENTINA'S DOUBLE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

The High and the Low in Politics: Appeals, Identities, and Political Positioning¹⁸

High and low are poles of a dimension in politics; they are *neither* social groups nor social strata, even though the high-low dimension in politics does have social implications. The fascinating relation between the social and the political is studied empirically in this paper. Second, this political space is about *political appeals*, a broad

but indispensable category discussed in detail earlier in this series (Ostiguy 2009). Most definitely, programs—whether economic or issue related—can be used, and are used, as appeals in politics. Third, recurrent appeals can lead to the creation of, be associated with, or keep alive certain political identities, as is the case in Argentina—or they may not, especially if given appeals crosscut a different, already constituted political divide. Certainly, identities imply a much longer time frame than a single political appeal. For this reason, political identities are usually linked to a political cleavage, and the most common political identities in a polity are in fact a constitutive component of that polity's main political cleavage. Fourth, in my view, neither pole of the high-low is, in and of itself, more “democratic” than the other, even though each clearly relates, in its own specific way, to key components of democracy.

The high-low dimension is, just like left and right, made up of two subdimensions or components (see Figure 2). These subdimensions, again like those constitutive of left and right, are at sharp angles in relation to one another, i.e., are highly correlated. Positions on the high-low dimension, however, may be more difficult to change in a fully credible way than left-right positioning, itself quite unstable in the case of many Latin American politicians. High and low can be said to be about recognition and identification, whether these are with issue position and/or politicians. While some would like to see high and low as “only” about “political style,” they actually connect deeply with a society's history, its group identities and, quite often, resentments, and with differing criteria for assessing what is likeable and normatively acceptable.

The first component of the high-low axis is the *social-cultural* appeal in politics. This component has to do with manners, demeanors, ways of speaking and dressing, and tastes displayed in public. On one pole, people publicly present themselves as well behaved,¹⁹ proper, composed, and perhaps even bookish. Negatively, they can appear as stiff, rigid, serious, colorless, somewhat distant, and boring. On the other pole, people frequently use a language that includes slang or folksy expressions and metaphors, are more demonstrative in their bodily or facial expressions as well as in their demeanor, and display more raw, culturally popular tastes. Politicians on the low are capable of being more uninhibited in public and are more apt to use coarse or popular language. They

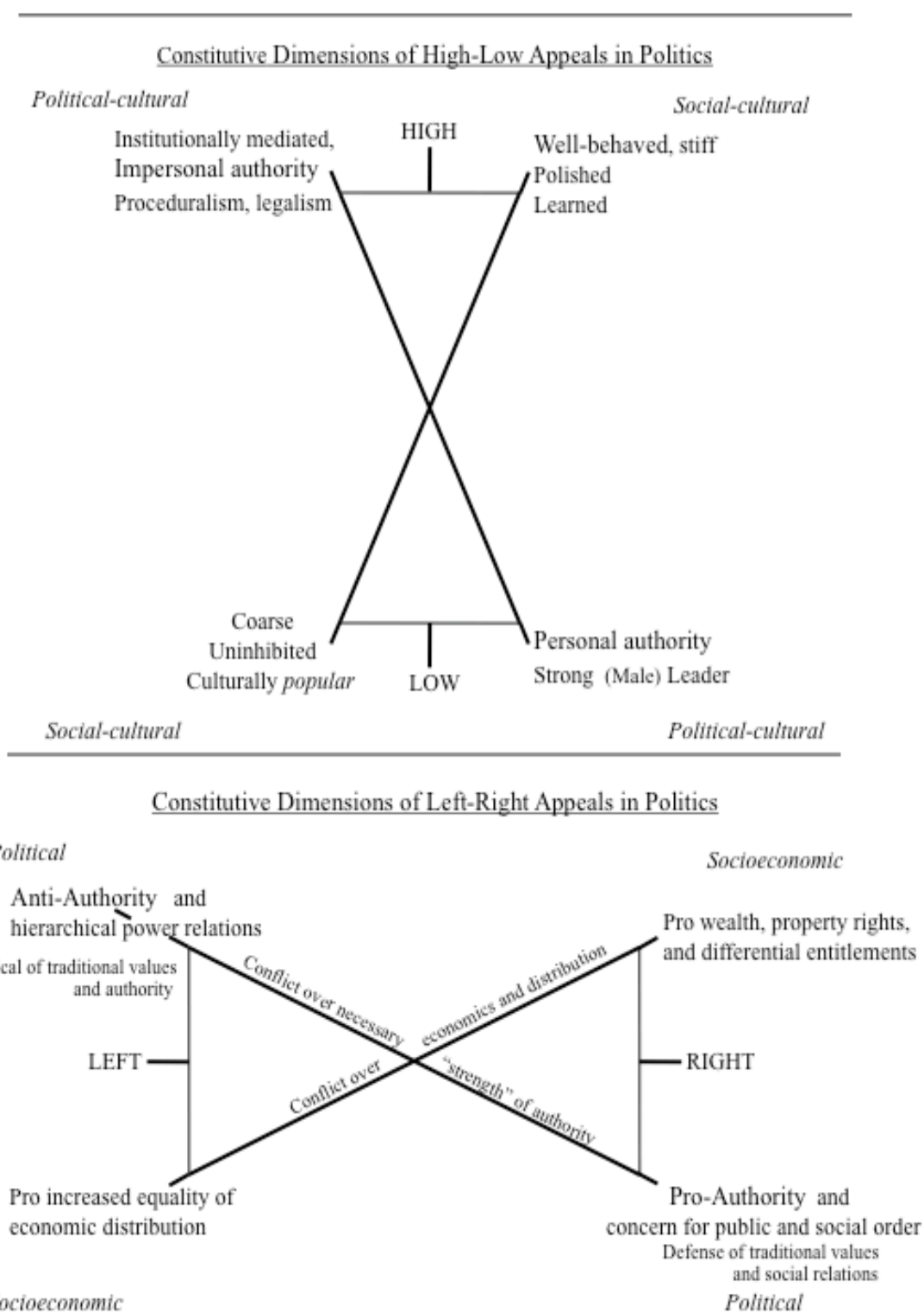
often appear—at least to the observer on the high—as more “colorful.” While one may wish to call this dimension class-cultural, I have found that it is empirically most closely correlated, though not synonymous, with educational level. Although concrete sociocultural differences exist in all societies, these differences are usually not attached to political identities. In some cases, however, sociocultural differences do become politicized, in that cultural patterns such as manners, declared tastes, language and mode of behavior in public become associated with political identities or political choice.

The second component of the high-low dimension of appeals in politics is *political-cultural*. This dimension is about forms of political leadership and preferred or advocated modes of decision-making in the polity. On one pole, one finds political appeals consisting of claims²⁰ to favor formal, impersonal, legalistic, institutionally-mediated models of authority. On the other pole, one finds political appeals emphasizing personalistic, strong (and generally male) leadership. Personal versus impersonal authority is perhaps a good synthesis of this polarity. The pole arguing for impersonal authority generally claims to represent “procedural normalcy” (at least as a goal to be achieved) in the conduct of public life. The personalist pole generally claims to be much closer to “the people” and to represent them better than the pole claiming or arguing for a more impersonal, procedural, proper model of authority. In practice, one finds on the low, to use Peronist language, the appeals of leaders “*con pelotas*” (“with balls”), who know how to lead the people. To paraphrase Aldo Rico, they “doubt” less (as “doubt is the bragging of intellectuals”). The low often entails a preference for decisive action (often at the expense of some “formalities”) over the “niceties” that accompany the rule of law.

These two components of the high-low axis very much have in common, as unusual as it may sound in our field of political science, the level of sublimation and of suppression that is judged ideal in the exercise of leadership and authority. The high is definitely more *abstract* and restrained, thus claiming to be more proper, whether in manners or in procedure. The low is earthier, more concrete, into immediacy.²¹ On the political-cultural dimension, it can be said that political authority on the low is less *mediated*. Mediation undoubtedly involves a more sublimated type of practice. On the social-cultural dimension, however, from the normative standpoint of the high, “cruder” and “more refined” are correct descriptions.

Figure 2

The Constitutive Dimensions of the High-Low and Left-Right Axes



As a last observation, it should be noted that the “immediate” is more concrete, immanent, earthy, and culturally localist (“from here”), while the reverse is true of abstracting mediation. The high tends to justify its concerns in more abstract terms and to convey them through more “universalizing,” less culturally localized language.

Together, the orthogonal left-right and high-low axes form a two-dimensional political space of appeals, in which we locate actors, parties, and politicians. Theoretically, as these two axes are fully neutral with regard to one another, *any* combination (for example forming four quadrants) is not only possible, as is the case with spaces configured even by non-orthogonal axes, but equally possible. And indeed, in Argentina, political actors have settled the entire political space. In this light, strategies of political appeal are multiplied because there are equally possible ways of *translating somewhat similar* social contrasts into politics, and thus of appealing to similarly situated voters. Each of these ways is then, both in theory and practice, equally combinable with any position on the orthogonal dimension.

From “The First Tyranny” to the Second: Sarmiento’s Civilization and Barbarism and the Characterization of a Twentieth-Century Cleavage

The high-low axis is deeply rooted in Argentine political and social history. It goes back to one of the key founding myths—at least from the high standpoint—of the modern Argentine nation: the famous image of “civilization and barbarism.”²² The myth is associated with one of Argentina’s most important nineteenth-century public figures: Domingo Sarmiento. For modern Argentina’s founding fathers, the combination of, on the one hand, good manners, the frock, urbanity, civility and, on the other, republicanism and respect for institutions (i.e., the high pole of each of the two sub-dimensions of the high-low axis) stood at the very core of their modernist project for the country. The opposite combination, represented by the Federal caudillos’ style of leadership, and their gaucho supporters’ uncouth lifestyle (especially in the *montoneras*, or troops of gaucho rebels following a caudillo),²³ constituted their nightmare.

Sarmiento saw the Argentine hinterland, its “essence,” as fundamentally “barbaric,” primitive, unsophisticated, indomitable, and careless.²⁴ This barbarism had to be eradicated, together with the lawless and brutish caudillos to which it gave rise, and be

replaced by “civilization.” The latter corresponded to an idealized version of literate, cultured, and self-disciplined northwestern Europe. The project indeed triumphed politically during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Of course, the actual behavior and demeanor of the immigrants, who flooded Buenos Aires and the provinces of the littoral en masse from Southern and Eastern Europe, did not actually correspond to this idealized image of cultured and polished, urbane, self-disciplined Europeans. In the first half of the twentieth century, the notion of “civilization and barbarism” became detached from rural/urban cultural differences—the particular rural world depicted in *Facundo* and later in *Martín Fierro* was becoming extinct—and the polarity attached itself to class differences instead (see Svampa 1994). The popular sectors, with their rude manners and often disorderly conduct, became a threat, especially when acting under the influence of radical anarchism, to the liberal oligarchic project that had become dominant. To put it schematically, in that structuring dichotomy, the urban worker started to replace the gaucho. In the 1940s, as we will see, Perón came to be characterized negatively by the opposition as the new caudillo, the new Juan Manuel de Rosas, the “second tyranny.”²⁵ With the workers (many of whom originated from the hinterland) taking the place of Sarmiento’s gauchos, and with Perón as the new Rosas, the newly emerging *anti-Peronist* opposition politically recreated in its full strength Sarmiento’s founding dichotomy between “civilization” and “barbarism.” By the 1960s, the Peronist left adopted this characterization, but reversed its normative poles. The Montoneros (of the militant Movimiento Peronista Montonero, or Montonero Peronist Movement) were created, taking their name from such a characterized nineteenth-century repertoire, while, under the influence of historical revisionism (originally on the right in the 1930s), the Peronist left started to revere Rosas as well as all of the nineteenth-century Federal caudillos. This type of political labeling became very widespread. Even within the armed forces, the two sides in an armed conflict between Peronist sympathizers and anti-Peronists in 1962 named themselves, respectively, the “crude” and the “cooked.”

This set of oppositions and hailings do *not* pertain *only* to the realm of symbolic dichotomies used to hail and name Argentine political adversaries.²⁶ Argentina is in fact spectacular, by world standards, in the extremes that it reaches on the *concrete*,

measurable,²⁷ high-low axis. The range stretches all the way from the aesthetic and cultural refinement of Jorge Luis Borges, whose disdain for Peronism also reached unprecedented levels (and who has been accused, not unjustly, of elitism and “foreignizing” orientations), to the brutish and boorish ex-Peronist gubernatorial candidate Herminio Iglesias, who could not conjugate properly in Spanish and who was widely linked to criminal activities in the Buenos Aires district of Avellaneda. Borges and Iglesias both have been eminently politicized, each becoming a political symbol vilified by those on the opposite side of the Peronist/ anti-Peronist divide. Peronists viewed Borges as the most virulent figure of what anti-Peronism stands for socioculturally,²⁸ while anti-Peronists viewed Iglesias as the worst sociocultural embodiment of Peronism.

The High-Low Political Spectrum and Polarity in Argentina

There exists a vast spectrum ranging between these two poles. The high may be divided into extreme and moderate variants. The very-high is manifestly well-read, cultured, and displays a high level of cultural or technical capital. Though numerically small, this position is endowed with significant symbolic and institutional capital. It ranges from the “Althusserian” left of the 1970s, to Socialist intellectuals on the center-left, to well-mannered and cultured public figures like television host Mariano Grondona on the right.

The moderate-high has a cultural outlook that resembles that of the middle sectors of developed countries. While such an outlook is quite hegemonic in societies like the US, in Argentina it is only one position among many, and not even the socially predominant one. Politicians representing this position have been drawn from parties all along the left-right spectrum. They include human rights (and later FREPASO) leader Graciela Fernández Meijide, Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union, UCR) leaders such as Raúl Alfonsín and Federico Storani, Peronist deputy Miguel Ángel Toma, and neoliberal television host Bernardo Neustadt. A large number of moderate-high politicians are from the Federal Capital, which has an average income and level of education superior to the national median.

The low may also be divided into moderate and extreme tendencies. The moderate-low is characterized by a conspicuously informal style in politics. It is very “Latin” in that it is very “warm,” “casual,” demonstratively affectionate publicly, and “fun.” From a high perspective, it is often tacky. Examples include “historical” PJ politicians such as Domingo Mercante, Héctor (“the uncle”) Cámpora, and Antonio Cafiero, as well as more recent PJ candidates like pop singer Palito (“Little Stick”) Ortega and boating champion Daniel Scioli. The use of nicknames to designate moderate-low politicians and public figures—a phenomenon impossible to imagine for the very-high—should be underscored. In terms of known political writers, Arturo Jauretche, with his informal mode of expression (despite his serious content), is a good example of the moderate-low. The Peronist intellectual magazine *Unidos* is an expression of this style closer to us in time, in sharp contrast to high political magazines such as *Punto de Vista* or *Ciudad Futura*.

The very-low has “balls” (*pelotas*); it is rougher and led by “real men” who can “lead the people” and do not hesitate on the means to “get things done.” The term “caudillo” is clearly used here as a term of praise. Socioculturally, the very-low is associated with the milieu of the urban lower sectors—particularly with the masculine skills required for survival and respect in this environment—as well as with the most rural areas, especially those of the northern interior. Writing of the “inorganic democracy” that developed between leaders and masses in the nineteenth century, J. L. Romero describes the caudillistic mode of political representation in the following way:

The *caudillo* depended on the masses and gained popular support by exacerbating class feeling. He generally stood out because of the excellence with which he practiced the virtues they admired: he was the bravest, the most daring, the most skillful” (1963 [1946]: 109–110).²⁹

Linked to these leadership aspects is the typical (in the view of many anti-Peronists) very-low practice of *patoterismo*, that is, of intimidation with the aim of “sending a message”³⁰ or securing physical spaces (walls, space in a rally) for political proselytism.

Although anti-Peronists tend to view such self-styled “caudillismo” as “barbaric” and “appalling,” it is an image that low politicians self-consciously maintain. Thus, Carlos Menem, while campaigning in his own rugged northern province of La Rioja,

declared: “They are branding us as ruffians. But from this manly and brave La Rioja, I can tell you that it is better to be a ruffian than a traitor selling out the fatherland.”³¹

Menem in the 1970s and 1980s, with his huge sideburns and horseback rides in a poncho, is a clear example of a very-low appeal. Other examples include Peronists like Herminio Iglesias, the Saadi Clan, and Luis Barrionuevo, as well as ex-Carapintada³² leader Aldo Rico.

High-low differences are reinforced by the images that each side holds of the other. Anti-Peronists tend to be appalled by very-low Peronists. They characterize them as *bestias*, or uncultured boors, and as lacking in ethics or principles. They associate symbols such as the Peronist March, mass rallies, and *bombos* (large, very loud drums) with the “*negros*”³³ and undisciplined, loutish, and violent behavior. These sociocultural and politico-cultural traits frustrate the anti-Peronists’ desired image of Argentina as a “normal” country, of largely European descent. Peronists, by contrast, view anti-Peronists as snobbish, distant, cold-hearted, and full of highfalutin language. They also tend to view anti-Peronists’ cosmopolitan orientation as putting on “European airs” and even being unpatriotic.

Figure 3 captures the politicized characterizations, at the mass level, of each side of the Peronist/anti-Peronist divide. In line with the definition of high and low already provided, it does so in three domains of characterization: the sociocultural; the political leadership or mode authority said to be preferred; and the historically important politicized adjectives regarding the *cultural* relation to the “outside/abroad” and the “inside/hinterland” (*afuera* and *interior*) of the country.

Figure 3

Politicized Characterizations at the Mass Level
(Rhetorical Hailings of Self and Other)

	Politicized Social Differentiation	Politicized Relation to the Outside/Hinterland	Political Leadership or Authority Said to be Preferred
A N T I - P E R O N I S T S	View by Self Well-bred, <i>bien educados</i>	Europe-oriented <i>Porteño</i> (of the port)	Procedural, <i>Intitucionalidad</i> Transparent, civic
	View by the Other <i>Gorila</i> Oligarch.	Foreignizing, <i>Cipayo</i>	Empty Talkers <i>Tibios</i> (lukewarm)
P E R O N I S T S	View by the Other Boorish, <i>lo bestia</i> ("negros de m...")	Of the hinterland <i>Roxista</i> <i>Cabecita (negra)</i>	<i>Patotero. Caudillo.</i> Personalistic
	View by Self Of the people, <i>lo popular</i> (<i>el pueblo de la patria</i>)	National, <i>de la Patria</i>	With balls, macho, <i>Valiente, Conduccion</i> <i>Caudillo. Vivo</i> Caring (female leaders)

Argentina's Double Political Spectrum

Argentine politics has historically been organized along a double political spectrum, composed of two parallel spectra, *each* ranging from left to right. In other words, each position along the left-right political axis is multiplied by two. The high-left is occupied by Marxist and Socialist organizations. Historically, both the Communist and Socialist parties were internationalist in orientation and heavily influenced by intellectual debates abroad. A Peronist worker described the Communists as: “regimented like little tin can soldiers. ... They have too disciplined a view for Argentines” (quoted in Ranis 1992:126-27). The Communists moreover maintained a certain bookish orientation, prizing theoretical “rigor” and placing a greater emphasis on abstract and professorial explanations of society than on working class mobilization. Marxism is, of course, highly theoretical: even its terminology (bourgeois, proletarian) is more abstract and less “commonsensical” than the Peronist categories of *pueblo* (people), *descamisados* (shirtless), and *humildes* (poor, humble people). The Socialists also emphasized book learning. Indeed, the Socialist Club served as a meeting place for some of Argentina's most sophisticated and highbrow intellectuals. Socialist Party appeals centered more on ethical public behavior, honesty, and citizens' rights than on worker mobilization. Indeed, before the advent of Peronism, the Socialist Party distinguished itself through its efforts to promote public libraries and conferences in popular neighborhoods (Romero 1986; Romero and Gutiérrez 1989 and 1995; Romero 2006) and—”higher” still—through its campaign against drinking and smoking among the working class.

The low-left is quite different. Low-left groups such as the Montoneros and the Peronist Youth (Juventud Peronista, or JP) also considered themselves socialist and revolutionary; but their rhetoric and appeals were infinitely much cruder and less intellectualized than the Marxist and socialist parties, which they disliked, viewed as “in the clouds” and as not understanding the concrete reality and ways of the Argentine people. The Montoneros took their name from the hordes of *Federal* horsemen (presented as “barbaric” in the established, older liberal view of Argentine history), made up of unkempt, lower-class, and fierce gauchos, in their localist fight against Buenos Aires' centralizing and “civilizing” Unitarians. They identified with Eva Perón, whom they viewed as a social revolutionary dedicated to the poor and the “shirtless,” and they

emphasized the anti-oligarchic, mobilizational, and socially redistributive aspects of Peronism. Unlike the bookish high-left, the rhetoric of the low-left was often extremely crude. Thus, typical JP chants included: “Hard, hard, hard...they shove it up their ass. Now, now, those of the Libertadora suck our balls” and “the working class wants the stick, to make the sons of bitches dance.” In the 1990s, a representative of the low-left was union leader Carlos “The Dog” Santillán.

The high-center emphasizes ethics, civic behavior, and proceduralism. Steeped in liberal theory, it has a long tradition of defending the rule of law, civic rights, pluralism, and republican institutions. Its discourse is more about the citizenry than the *pueblo*. Since the late nineteenth century, the high-center space has been occupied mostly by the Radical Civic Union. Always more civic than radical, the UCR has long been associated with mild manners, a minimum of propriety, and tolerance. Inversely, it has been associated with meek governments, incapable or unwilling to grab “the bull by the horns” and refusing to build strong alliances with the concrete “factors of power,” relying instead on the vaguer concept of “citizen mandate.” The UCR has traditionally encompassed factions that range from the center-left to the center-right. Although its economic program has varied across time, it has generally adhered to center or center-left programs such as developmentalism and Keynesianism.

The low-center, since the 1940s, has been occupied by “classical” or “mainstream” Peronism—although several minor provincial parties are also located on the low center-right. As with the high-center Radical governments of Illia and Alfonsín, the low-center has been associated with a mixed economy, the import substitution model, and a role of the state in public welfare, while being decidedly non-revolutionary and anti-communist. In contrast to the Radical governments, however, such policies are associated in their low variant with the concrete needs of the *humildes* or the *pueblo*, rather than with such abstract ideas as being “progressive” and “civic” or with economic theories (such as Keynesianism). Low-center politicians are more likely to focus on simply “delivering the goods.” Furthermore, politicians on the low always claim to be “true representatives” of the local setting, and to “get things done.” While politicians on the high often aim for the moral high ground, politicians on the low claim to be “rooted” or, as it seems from the high, appear as colorful, backward, or simply “appalling.” In the

rural setting of La Rioja, a vivid example of the low-center in the 1980s was its Governor Carlos Menem, the “Tiger of Anillaco,” with his huge sideburns and galloping horse rides in poncho. Representatives of the low-center include powerful union leaders such as Augusto Vandor and Lorenzo Miguel (with their thuggish image and pragmatic, “bread and butter” orientation) and “traditional” Peronist leaders such as Eduardo Duhalde and (higher) Antonio Cafiero, or the founding Peronist figure Domingo Mercante.

The high-right believes in rationality and efficiency (though often not democracy), and it has often adopted a class-conscious interpretation of what “civilization” is. Often associated with the “oligarchy” and its institutions, such as the Rural Society and the Jockey Club, as well as with—at times—its military allies, the high-right is economically conservative and culturally cosmopolitan. It is certainly very fond of order (for capital accumulation and “progress”) and has been described by O’Donnell (1973: 78–82) in his writings on “technocratic roles.” Like the high-left, it tends to be European—or (here) US—oriented and thus prone to attacks on the low for being “anti-Argentine.” Representatives of the high-right include Borges, conservative leader Álvaro Alsogaray, ex-military dictator Jorge Videla, and Economic Ministers such as José Martínez de Hoz and (lower) Domingo Cavallo. In the post-1983 period, the high-right space was filled by the Unión de Centro Democrático (Union of the Democratic Center, or UCeDe) and, less significantly, several (lower) provincial parties.

The low-right, by contrast, tends to be nativist, ultra-nationalist, and, importantly, oriented toward strong (male) leadership. Unlike the cosmopolitan high-right, it claims to be rooted in the particular cultural traits of the “people of the nation.” The low-right places a strong emphasis on authority and social order, is staunchly anti-leftist, and is generally pro-military. It tends to emphasize strict loyalty (*verticalismo*, or “verticalism”) to the *conductor* (leader). Whereas the rhetorical focus of the Peronist left is on the “shirtless” or *lo popular* (the popular), the Peronist right focuses on the Argentine nation (instead of the *pueblo*), the flag (instead of the rags), and *lo nacional* (more than *lo popular*). Representatives of the low-right include orthodox Peronist leaders such as Herminio Iglesias, *Isabelista* minister José López Rega, conservative unionists such as Jorge Triaca and Armando Cavalieri, and, certainly, Alberto Brito Lima. In its more extreme form, the low-right is characterized by a strong military ethos, bellicose

nationalism, and a fascination with violence. Examples of the extreme low-right include paramilitary groups such as Comando de Organización (literally, the “Organization Commando”) and arguably the Iron Guard in the 1970s, the Carapintada military rebels in the 1980s, and the officially non-Peronist Movement for Dignity and National Independence (Movimiento por la Dignidad y la Independencia Nacional, or MODIN)—led by the crude and “macho” Aldo Rico—in the 1990s.³⁴

Despite the fact that left-right differences between low and high groups were often quite narrow, alliances or defections across the Peronist/anti-Peronist cleavage were extremely infrequent. Thus, whereas voters and sometimes public figures frequently oscillated between the Socialists and the Radicales (both of which put strong discursive emphasis on public ethics, civic behavior, and cultural capital), there has been remarkably little cooperation or party switching between the Socialists and labor-based left-of-center Peronists. Although these groups always shared a similar socioeconomic program, the sociocultural distance between them is enormous. A similar phenomenon occurred on the right, where conservative elites and right-wing Peronists shared an antipathy toward “subversives” but rarely spontaneously cooperated. Intra-cleavage alliances are much more common. Thus, Socialists, Radicals, and high conservatives could come together in the Democratic Union in 1946 and the Alliance in 1997, while Peronism aligned with (and absorbed) the low-right MODIN in the late 1990s.

GENESIS AND EVOLUTION OF ARGENTINA’S ENDURINGLY STRUCTURED POLITICAL SPACE

We will now analyze how this double political spectrum came about in Argentina, and then trace its durability, decade after decade (during which the historical context changed drastically), up to the contemporary period. The centrality of the high-low divide also explains why political groupings with otherwise similar left-right positions routinely align in opposite camps or appeal to different social bases.

The Critical Juncture: The Rise of Peronism and the Creation of the Double Political Spectrum (1943–1946)

Between 1943 and 1946, Argentine politics experienced a remarkable series of shifts along dimensions defining political conflict. In the immediate wake of the 1943 military coup, a left-right divide was clearly discernible, as a right-wing nationalist military regime, focusing on order and authority, confronted a leftist, internationalist, and liberal-democratic opposition led primarily by students and intellectuals.³⁵ Although neither side mobilized the working and lower classes, the leftist opposition was more ideologically disposed to a working-class alliance than was the government.

During 1944 and early 1945, however, the axis defining political conflict began to shift from the left-right dimension to the high-low dimension. First, the nationalist right lost much of its power within the military regime. Second, in the face of mounting opposition by civil society and a changed international climate due to the victory of the Allies, the military regime took steps to democratize in mid-1945, announcing (clean) elections to be held before the end of the year. Third, there arose within the regime a strong leader, not overly attached to procedural rule, who combined a nationalist and localist discourse with a culturally popular demeanor and redistributive socioeconomic policies.

While it is well known that then Labor and Social Security Secretary Perón built working-class support through a range of economically pro-labor policies, he was at the same time the very first Argentine politician to make systematic appeals on the low. Though tame by today's standards, these appeals were highly controversial in the Argentina of the 1940s.³⁶ It included using an informal, very colloquial style and popular slang; culturally marked actions such as taking off his jacket at public rallies; and his relationship with Evita, who had a reputation for promiscuity linked to her job as an actress and her social background. According to Silberstein, Perón,

talked to the workers in their own language.... [He] was the one who made politics fun, who allowed one to dance in the street, to shout well- or ill-intentioned songs, full of happiness and swearing at the top of one's voice; who took off his shirt and stayed in shirt sleeves, like one does at work or at home; [and] who spoke against the bosses, against the oligarchs, those who sold out the motherland (Silberstein 1972: 98).

Throughout 1944–45, the effect of Perón’s combined socioeconomic and socio-cultural appeal, together with some police measures directed at non-cooperative leftist union leaders, was to increase the potential importance of the working and lower classes as an effective source of political support for Perón himself, more than for the “Revolution of 1943” itself. This social support materialized in the mythical founding event of Peronism: the spontaneous mass rally of October 17, 1945, at which a multitude of workers demanded the liberation of “their” Colonel, who had been imprisoned by regime soft-liners.³⁷ In his famous October 17 speech from the presidential balcony following his release, Perón fused the regime’s nationalism and concern for order with his own personal leadership and the culturally *popular*:

Workers!...This is the suffering *pueblo* that represents the pain of the motherland, which we will vindicate...Mingled with this sweating mass, I hug you all hard and long against my heart, as I would do with my mother....From this hour,...may Colonel Perón be the link of union that will make the brotherhood between the *pueblo*, the army, and the police indestructible. May this union be eternal so that this *pueblo* grows in the spirit of the...authentic forces of nationality and order.³⁸

As a result of these shifts, what had been a nationalist, pro authority-and-order, clerical, and overall right-wing project could certainly not, by 1945, be defined as right-wing in terms at least of one of the two subdimensions of left and right.³⁹ Politically, it was now clearly on the low in both subdimensions of high and low.

The nature of the opposition also, and at the very same time, changed considerably during 1945. What had once been a left-wing democracy movement against military rule shifted into a “civic” coalition, politically on the high. With the inclusion of the main, *Alvearista* (or ex-President Marcelo T. de Alvear’s “Alvearist”) wing of the UCR in mid-1945, the opposition movement became a civic-republican front demanding free elections, the rule of law, and an immediate return to constitutional rule. Interpreting the rise of Perón as the advent of a (pro-Axis) “above procedures” strong leader with a mass following, these opposition forces came to view the regime as not so much a conservative military dictatorship but, now and in light of the above, as essentially mobilizational, demagogical, and “fascist.”

With the launching of Perón’s presidential candidacy, subsequent to the October 17 working-class mobilization in support of Perón, the definition of the political situation

continued to shift even more. The dimension defining the political conflict between “Perón-ism” and its opponents was now entirely, as well as conspicuously, high-low. The opposition forces, in reaction to what they viewed as Perón’s “demagogic” leadership style, began to talk of “morality in politics,” “legality,” “the calming of passions,” and the “educated efforts of the citizenry.”⁴⁰ UCR leaders declared, for example, that

with a cynicism unprecedented in the annals of *civility*, against all norms of *respect* and social cohabitation...the country suffers the asphyxia of its essential rights and is at the mercy of a *sensual* and irresponsible coterie which...seeks to impose the candidacy of the greatest *demagogue* of our history.⁴¹

Increasingly, however, the opposition to Perón took an explicit *social-cultural* turn (see the two subdimensions of high and low in Figure 2). As Halperín notes, the opposition was scandalized by Perón’s

break with a political—and not only political—style on which people located in ideologically opposite positions had previously agreed. Since October 17, Perón had become the head of the “shirtless,” and this naming was not only symbolic; many of his supporters had been seen that day in the street without this garment, and although the leader of the movement always refused the invitations of the supporting multitude to imitate it, he immodestly displayed himself without a coat...These shocking innovations in style reached their most significant level with Perón’s marriage to Eva Duarte (Halperín 1991: 54).

The opposition’s response not only to Perón’s form of political leadership but also to his emerging working- and lower-class concrete following crucially became, as well, increasingly *class-cultural* in nature. Luna’s description of the left’s reaction to the October 17 mobilization is particularly telling in this regard:

The Socialist Party and the Communist Party had intellectually elaborated an ideal worker, an archetype that looked much like the upright artisan of disciplined militancy who came to the popular library, did not drink alcohol or smoke, and could cite Marx and Spencer...When the sight of those workers in flesh and blood, workers who were not Marxist redeemers but common men who sweated, swore, and drank cheap wine...hit them, they chose to deny that this was the proletarian reality of the country (1969: 349).

Precisely because of the interpretation they initially developed of the political situation from mid-1943 to early 1945, leftists were forced to come up with a reason why people from the popular sectors would follow a leader who was “obviously” not on the left. After October 17, *La Vanguardia* (Socialist) and *La Hora* (Communist) came up

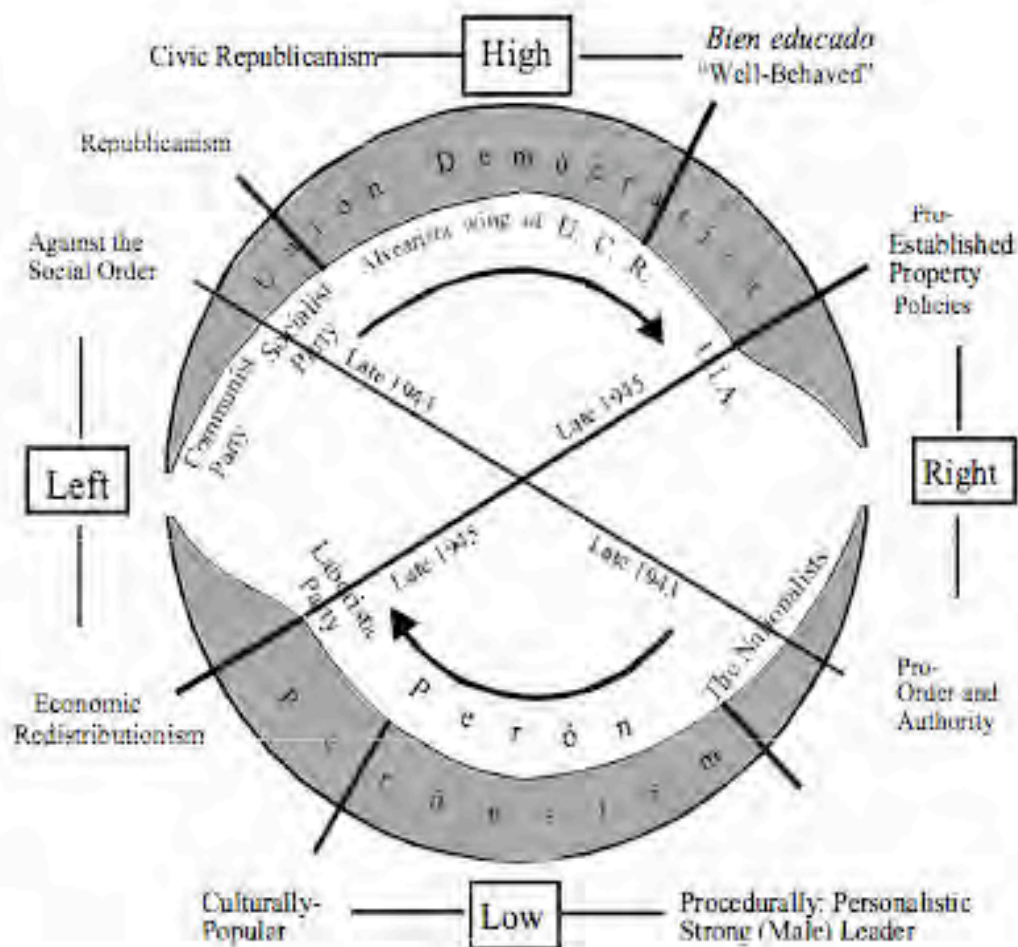
with an account that depicted Perón's followers not as workers (allegedly still communists, socialists, etc.) but as part of the lumpen proletariat: hoodlums, ruffians, drunkards, prostitutes.⁴² From left to right, oddly enough, many public figures on the high started to conflate "barbarism *from above*" (that of Perón, Rosas, the caudillos) with "barbarism *from below*" (that of the "hordes", the "lumpen," the *malón* or Indian raid, the gaucho *montoneras*) (Svampa 1994: 253): that is, an authoritarian and culturally nativist demagogue with unruly and dangerous "hordes."

The opposition actually played a central role in the sociocultural turn of the campaign, inventing a variety of imaginative new sociocultural terms to denigrate Perón's followers. Interestingly, these terms were often re-appropriated by the Peronists. An example is the epithet "shirtless," which, though originally employed as an insult by the Socialist *La Vanguardia*, was quickly adopted by Perón and transformed into a point of pride.⁴³

The transformation of the opposition was completed when the conservative economic elites, responding to Perón's statist and redistributionist economic program, finally joined the anti-Perón coalition, started in 1943 by Communists and Socialists. At this point, it no longer made sense at all to characterize the Peronist/anti-Peronist cleavage in the left-right terms of 1943. The final result was a broad alliance of leftists, "proper" middle sectors, and big business, all claiming to favor the "constitution" and republicanism. Thus, the Democratic Union that opposed Perón in 1946 included the Communist and Socialist parties, the bulk of the UCR, *and* the conservative Argentine Industrial Union (Unión Industrial Argentina, or UIA).

The 1946 electoral campaign brought sociocultural as well as politico-cultural issues to the fore, establishing them as a constitutive element of Peronist and anti-Peronist identities. On one side was Perón, taking his coat off, using slang expressions, engaging in informal practices, and—a highly personalist strong leader—followed by crude *murgas* (boisterous "carnavalesque" street dancers) and unruly so-called "hordes." On the other side, the opposition emphasized propriety and civic behavior, as well as institutions, claiming high-level abstract principles.

Figure 4
The Creation of the Double Political Spectrum
in Argentina (1943-1946)



A highly significant theoretical finding of this section is the fact that, at least in the case of Argentina in the 1940s, the two parts of Figure 2 (the two subdimensions of high-low; the two subdimensions of left-right) can, conceptually and theoretically, be *superimposed* upon one another (as a “wheel”). In *this* way, Figure 2 gives rise to Figure 4. Figure 4 theoretically and historically orders the narrative of this section on the 1940s. The superimposition of the ordered *subdimensions* of left-right and of high-low on a two-dimensional, “flat” space thus importantly gives rise, graphically and conceptually, to a 360 “wheel” of axes of appeals in politics.⁴⁴ In it, all of the subdimensions of Figure 2, together, form “spikes” or axes that define potential—and in this actual case, very real—ordered *political* divides

During the key 1943–46 period, since no original actors deserted the coalitions as the conflict incrementally but rapidly *shifted* from one dimension to the other, the broad political configurations shown in the gray areas of Figure 4 formed and later crystallized. In fact, the different thematic, political areas (the outer ring of Figure 4) of these two broad configurations have constituted, since then, important elements of Peronism and anti-Peronism, as well as of their corresponding identities. While these elements were separate and arguably unrelated before 1943, they thus gradually became recognizable elements of Peronist and anti-Peronist identities. Moreover, once they congealed as a political divide after this critical juncture, they also became quite recognizable components (on the structuring left-right and high-low axes) of the double political spectrum.

The Durability of the Double Political Spectrum

Just as the military coup of 1955, directed specifically against Peronism, and the military coups of 1966 and 1976, directed at the political game as a whole, failed to destroy Peronism, they also failed to transform the Argentine party system and, more importantly, the double political spectrum ordering it. The post-1955 period saw the emergence of a variety of new political forces, but these groups’ positions and alliances reinforced the high-low cleavage rather than crosscutting or blurring it. And although Peronism and its opponents underwent substantial changes along the left-right axis, their positioning on the high-low axis remained relatively stable.

The 1960s and the 1970s. The 1955 “Liberating Revolution” sought to transform Argentine politics by eradicating the “anomaly” of Peronism. Many military, intellectuals, and socioeconomic elites viewed the post-1955 period as an opportunity to restore “normalcy” after more than a decade of “tyranny” and “boorishness.” Thus, shortly after Perón’s overthrow, Borges published “*L’illusion comique*,” or “The Comic Illusion,” which described the Perón period as one of

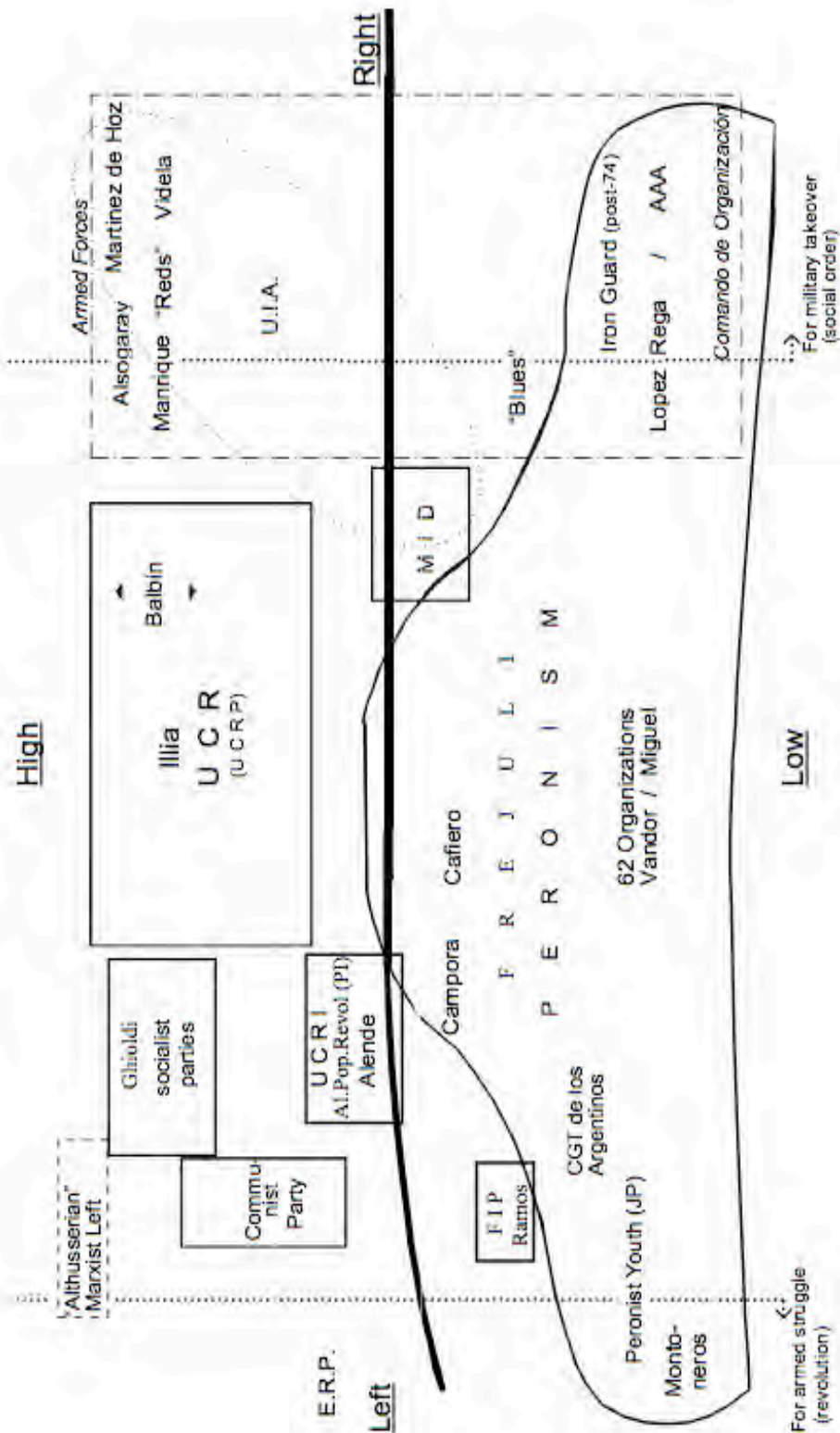
opprobrium and foolery, [during which] the canons of pulp fiction were applied to the government of the Republic. There were two stories: one of a criminal nature...and the other of a staged nature, made up of stupidity or gross ignorance and fairy tales for the consumption of boors and bumpkins (1955: 9–10).

Yet efforts to stamp out Peronism and the political low were a failure. Though radically transformed by Perón’s overthrow, Peronism not only survived but moved even further to the low. A period of non-institutional violence by the working-class Peronist resistance responded to the anti-Peronist campaign of the “*libertadora*”⁴⁵ (or so-called “liberating”) government. Later, under the liberal semi-democratic⁴⁶ governments of Arturo Frondizi and Arturo Illia, Peronist circles emerged and grew, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, where a more “intellectual” and militant leadership were reappropriated the *negative* characterizations of *both* the nineteenth-century federal camp as depicted by liberal historiography and of the Peronists by anti-Peronists. This reappropriation of the “barbaric,” so to speak, included the claiming of both the “tyranny” of the caudillo Rosas (especially on the Peronist right) and of the roaming *montoneras* (especially on the Peronist left). At the same time, Sarmiento and Juan Bautista Alberdi as historical figures, and Borges as a cultural one, became national foes.⁴⁷

The endurance of politicized high-low differences meant that left-right conflicts continued to be crosscut by the high-low axis, and, as a result, each position along the left-right axis continued to be multiplied by two, as mapped in Figure 5.

Figure 5

The Double Political Spectrum in the 1960s and 1970s



On the radical left, in the 1970s, two distinct guerrilla organizations prospered. The People's Revolutionary Army (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo, or ERP) was Marxist and internationalist. It hoisted the red flag and took the struggles of the—rather foreign—Vietcong as a model.⁴⁸ The ERP boasted of having a theoretically clear political line, as is often the case with the Marxist left. Clearly to its right stood the pro-Soviet Communist Party.

On the very low-left, in contrast, were the Montoneros and the JP. Much more nationalist than the ERP, and also very crude in their political rhetoric, the Montoneros took their name from the *montoneras*, described above, and claimed to fight in the name of the poor, the shirtless, or the “true Argentine people,” i.e., the “people of Perón,” more than to follow a Marxist line or other internationalist ideologies. Although the Montoneros, like the ERP, recruited heavily from among the radicalized middle-class youth, it was a fascination with the *pueblo*, the slums, and the so-called *descamisados*—more than with revolutionary heroes like Che Guevara—that attracted Montoneros militants. Unlike those of the bookish high-left, the discourse and slogans of the Peronist Left in the 1970s were particularly low, as exemplified by slogans such as: “The Peronist Youth go out on the street and fight; and if they find a *gorila*,⁴⁹ if they don't shit on him, they piss on him.”⁵⁰

Completely at the other end of the high-low spectrum stood the very high, “cultured,” Europe-centered, center-left socialist parties. They also worked within the realm of constitutional principles.

The center continued to be divided into non- or anti-Peronist high, and Peronist low. The high-center was occupied by different wings of the UCR. The UCR suffered several divisions during this period, the most important of which was the 1957 split between Arturo Frondizi's Intransigent Radical Civic Union (Unión Cívica Radical Intransigente, or UCRI) and Ricardo Balbín's People's Radical Civic Union (Unión Cívica Radical del Pueblo, or UCRP). The UCRP, which eventually gained recognition as the official UCR, positioned itself on the high-center during the Illia presidency (1963–66) and then moved to a more center-right position under Balbín in the post-1966 period. The UCRI attempted to locate itself more to the low and somewhat to the left of the UCRP, winning the 1958 presidential election with the support of many Peronist

voters. In 1963, the UCRI itself divided. The bulk of the party backed progressive Buenos Aires governor Oscar Alende, transforming the UCRI—which would later evolve into the PI (Partido Intransigente, or Intransigent Party)—into very-moderate-high, left-of-center party. The rest of the party, led by Frondizi, formed the Movement of Integration and Development (Movimiento de Integración y Desarrollo, or MID), which moved to the right and, as the party appealing to nationalist industrialists, eventually became an ally of the Peronists. In 1973, Alende ran as the leftist candidate of the *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria* (Popular Revolutionary Alliance, or APR front with the new PI at its core) and obtained 7.5% of the national vote. In that same election, Balbín, now sole representative of the Radical identity, obtained 21.3% of the vote against Perón's candidate, Cámpora.

The low-center was occupied by mainstream Peronist factions, such as the “62 Organizations” union faction, which was led by metalworker leaders Augusto Vandor and, after his assassination, Lorenzo Miguel. Although there was little programmatic difference between the Illia government and the *Vandorista* (Vandorist) unions, the two were markedly different on the high-low axis. Illia, a delicate, elderly politician who was called “the Turtle” by his opponents, believed in proceduralism and the rule of law, and, as a result, he never effectively engaged the country's so-called “factors of power.” By contrast, Vandor, Miguel, and other union bosses often flouted legal procedure, relying instead on “face-to-face” relationships, back room negotiations, and no small amount of intimidation.⁵¹ In the 1960s, orthodox Peronism opposed the radical Illia government. In the 1970s, when Peronism came to occupy a very large portion of the Argentine political space, orthodox Peronism and the Peronist left waged war with one another. Héctor Cámpora, who was Perón's delegate in Argentina and had the support of the leftist Peronist Youth, obtained half of Argentina's vote as the Peronist candidate. A few months later, Perón himself, now just returned to Argentina, obtained an electoral victory of unprecedented magnitude: 61.9% of the votes. He died one year later, after beginning a move to destroy the low-left on which he had relied while in exile.

The high-low political differences were particularly wide on the right. The high-right included conservative leaders such as Álvaro Alsogaray and Francisco Manrique, economists such as Juan and Roberto Alemann, powerful socioeconomic actors such as

the Rural Society and the Argentine Industrial Union, and top military leaders such as Jorge Videla, head of the second bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. Alsogaray, a landmark of the high-right, has founded, consecutively, four parties from 1957 to the 1980s; has had very close ties to the military, and was Argentina's ambassador to the US during the first bureaucratic-authoritarian regime. The ex-captain Manrique, minister of social welfare during the first bureaucratic-authoritarian regime, obtained the highest percentage of the vote ever received by the high-right: 15% in 1973.

The low-right, which was historically associated with the nationalist and catholic right, included Peronist paramilitary groups such as the Comando de Organización (the "Organization Commando") and, in the 1960s and mid-1970s, arguably the Iron Guard.⁵² It also included "The Wizard" ("*el brujo*") José López Rega, who became the main figure behind the weak presidency of Isabel Perón after Juan Perón's death in 1974. López Rega, a former police chief who once said that "there is nothing like the Argentine *quebracho* (tree) for hitting leftists over the head,"⁵³ founded the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance (Alianza Anticomunista Argentina), which was responsible for the killing of many leftists in the 1970s. The orthodox and the *Lopezreguistas* (supporters of López Rega) allied during a time to eliminate the left (especially the Peronist left), but differences then grew between the orthodox Miguel, on the very-low center, and López Rega, far on the low-right.⁵⁴

The armed forces were also divided along the high-low axis, with the more nationalist wing (the Blues) earning the nickname of *crudos* ("crude") and the more pro-West, anti-Peronist, and bureaucratic wing (the Reds) receiving the nickname of *cocidos* ("cooked"). Although both factions were right-wing and anti-communist, they clashed repeatedly and even briefly entered into armed conflict in the early 1960s.

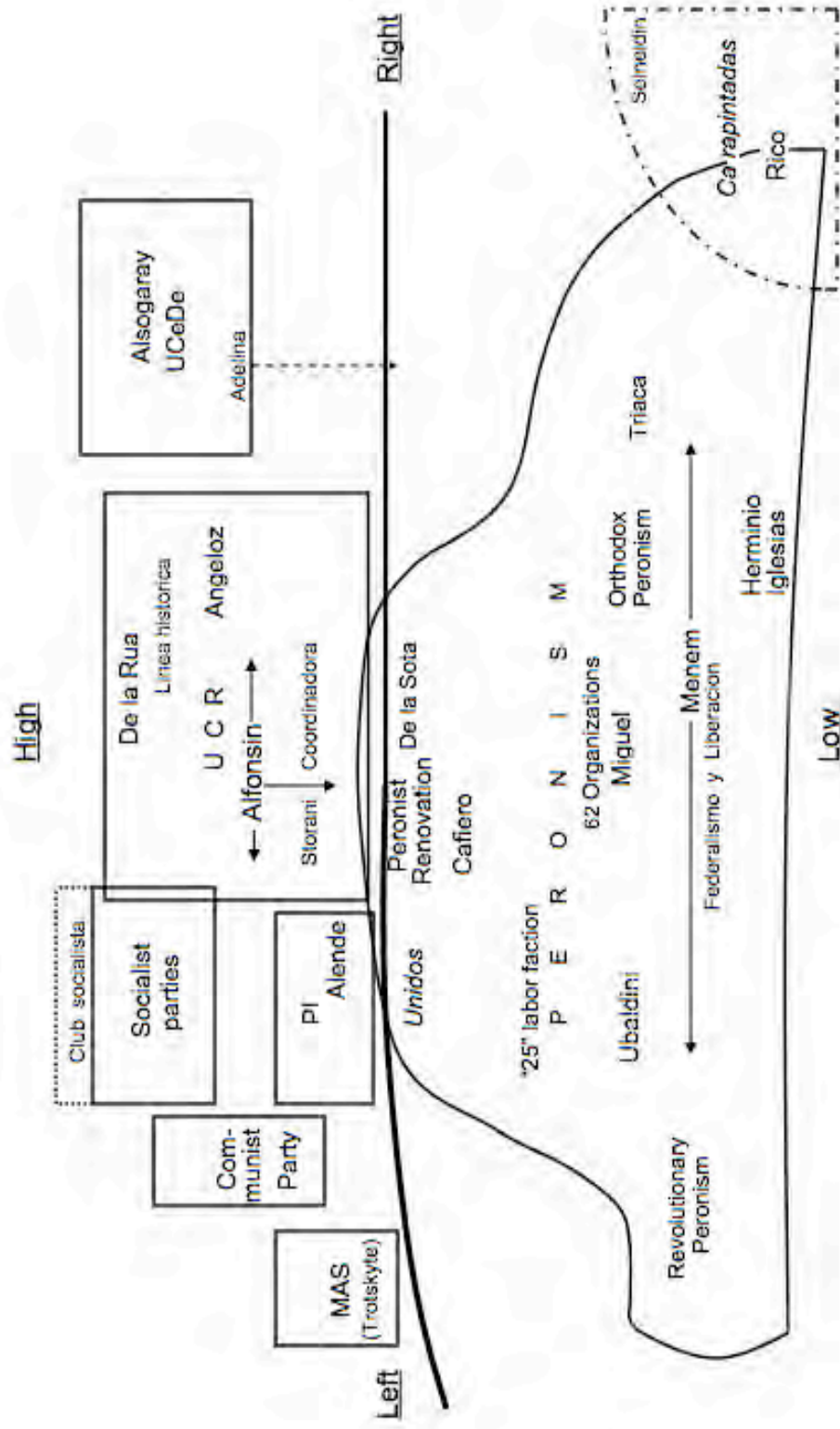
The Post-Transition Period and the 1980s.

The 1976–83 military dictatorship and the democratic transition that followed brought important political and electoral novelties. The far left was decimated by repression, and Peronism, weakened by both repression and the failure of its "collaborationist wing" to distance itself from the military leadership, suffered its first ever electoral defeat in 1983. The experience of the military dictatorship had a major political impact: in the 1980s,

people came to strongly value liberal democracy. Inversely, violence and paralegal deeds, which had become the main form of political action in the 1970s, were severely delegitimized because of the very negative dynamic they had produced. On regime issues, the dictatorship therefore had very important consequences. But with regard to the structuring of Argentina's political space, including the names of "institutional" political actors (whether parties or public figures) and their location in that space, the two bureaucratic-authoritarian experiences produced very little change, as can be observed by comparing Figure 5 and Figure 6.⁵⁵ The much heralded appearance in the 1980s of a new party on the high-right, led by Alsogaray and representing conservative business interests in the political arena (Gibson 1990, 1996), was not new; it was Alsogaray's fourth party. Nor did it obtain vote totals superior in magnitude to those of the conservative Manrique the previous decade. Similarly, the initial, relatively strong showing of Alende's PI as a third party, with around 6% of the vote in 1985, was also not novel, nor was its electoral total superior to that obtained by Alende in the past. In fact, except for the shrinking of the Peronist left, the maps of parties, actors, and positions in Argentina's political space in two different decades, in Figure 5 and Figure 6, appear almost indistinguishable from one another.

The 1980s are a classic instance of the double political spectrum in its pure form. The high-low framework is particularly important for the 1980s in that left-right differences between the PJ under Cafiero and the UCR under Alfonsín were minimal, to such an extent that they do not differentiate the two main parties. More importantly yet, the most original, significant, and drastic political moves by key politicians in the 1980s both to achieve victory over their internal adversaries and to change their party's electoral fortunes occurred precisely along the high-low dimension, as we shall shortly see.

Figure 6
The Double Political Spectrum in the 1980s



In the 1980s, on the left and high of the high-low divide, there continued to be a handful of small Marxist parties, the most important of which was the new Trotskyite Movement to Socialism (Movimiento al Socialismo, or MAS). Although MAS made an effort to organize in working-class zones such as greater Buenos Aires, its success was limited, and it remained largely a party of intellectual cadres. The aging Socialists stood as always on the very-high, left-of-center. The PI located itself, again as always, clearly to the low of the Socialists, and more or less at the same point on the left-right axis. The PI, Argentina's third party throughout most of the 1980s, aimed at a mass base, claiming to be "national-and-popular" (in contrast to the Socialists), but its electorate was predominantly well-educated, young, middle to upper-middle class, and concentrated in the capital. The PI program combined typical left proposals such as a moratorium on foreign debt payments and the nationalization of the banks and foreign trade with more "cultural-left" issues like ecology, citizen participation, and even bicycle lanes in Buenos Aires. The very-low left had considerably shrunk, but it was still occupied by the ex-Montoneros, which formed Intransigence and Mobilization, and later Revolutionary Peronism. Left-of-center and on the moderate low, very close to the divide, the informally written magazine *Unidos* (with "Chacho" Álvarez as an editor) stood out, representing the left-wing of the Renovation faction. The PI's profile can be starkly contrasted to that of low-left General Labor Confederation leader Saúl Ubaldini, whose sociocultural appeal was unambiguously *popular*. Though similar to higher left parties in his opposition to International Monetary Fund policies and calls for socioeconomic redistribution, Ubaldini's socioeconomic discourse was informal and sentimental,⁵⁶ focusing on the *humildes*. It was also localist and steeped with popular Catholicism, including regular invocations of the Virgin Mary and Saint Cayetano (the patron saint of labor).

The UCR and its different factions continued to be on the high center. Some changes occurred, however. In the beginning of the 1980s and after the death of Balbín, Raúl Alfonsín was able to win the leadership of the UCR, against the more old-fashioned *Línea histórica* (the self-named Historical Line). Alfonsín's faction, *Renovación y Cambio* (Renovation and Change), aimed at making the UCR a modern mass party, with the help of what became known in the 1980s as the *Coordinadora* (or roughly, the

“Coordinating Organization”),⁵⁷ dealing directly with the factors of power and developing a mobilization capability.⁵⁸ The low center continued to be occupied by a variety of Peronist factions, including, as we shall see, the Renovators on the center-left *and* very near the high-low divide, and—much lower—the so-called Orthodox leaders on the center and center-right (Figure 6).

On the right, the UCeDe established itself on the very-high right, while Peronists such as Triaca and, arguably, Herminio Iglesias stood quite low on the right. More on the right, yet, were Rico and the *Carapintadas* (Painted Faces). The UCeDe, whose leader Alsogaray had strong historical ties with military regimes, positioned itself as an “anti-populist,” privatizing, economically liberal, free market party. It enjoyed the support of much of the business community, and its electorate was concentrated in the wealthiest neighborhoods of the Federal Capital. Despite efforts by one party leader, Adelina de Viola,⁵⁹ to “popularize” the party, the UCeDe generally maintained a high sociocultural profile. Again, the “cooked” demeanor of many UCeDe leaders contrasted with the macho, thug-like image of low right figures such as Herminio Iglesias and Aldo Rico. In the 1980s, the *Carapintadas* were middle-ranking military officers (the leadership was at the lieutenant colonel level within the Comando elite troops or special forces) who took up arms against the so-called liberal, actually high-right, military command (Norden 1996: 107–135). They used ultranationalist rhetoric, were fiercely anti-US and anti-Britain, and espoused a form of Catholic fundamentalism that included constant invocations of the Virgin and the Fatherland. While the military command had historically favored order and “social cleanliness,” the *Carapintadas* appealed to “guts,” mystical fervor, blood, and nationalism. The *Carapintadas* became part of Menem’s vast electoral campaign coalition and even offered to take up arms, if necessary, to defend a Menem Peronist victory at the polls in 1989.⁶⁰

It would be a highly erroneous conclusion, however, to believe that because the Argentine political space remained structured, overall, as a double political spectrum, no major, high-stake political positioning game occurred during that decade. The exact opposite is true. And it is precisely as a tool for understanding the logic and stakes of the major political strategies which unfolded that the double political spectrum framework—

and the high-low, left-right two dimensional space more generally—prove so useful as a framework of analysis for Argentine politics.

The most important strategic political movements on the part of political actors in the 1980s occurred along the high-low dimension. As summarized above, Alfonsín tried to relocate the UCR more on the *moderate*-high, closer to the divide. He thus sought to develop a mass movement capability for the UCR; stated that “with democracy, one can eat”; dealt directly with the factors of power; and appealed to both middle- and working-class sectors. He also tried to move the UCR to the center-left, linking it with social-democracy. At the same time, the PJ lost two national elections: in 1983 and, with its worst score, in 1985. Such defeats led to severe questioning on the part of many Peronist leaders and strategists. The movement became even more disunited, both along the left-right axis (a continued legacy of the 1970s) and increasingly along the high-low axis. In the 1985 elections in the key province of Buenos Aires, Antonio Cafiero split from the orthodox controlled, very-low, and right-of-center provincial PJ, and ran on a separate ticket. His Frente Renovador (Renovation Front) won three times as many votes as the orthodox Frente Justicialista de Liberación (Justicialist Liberation Front, or FREJULI) led by Herminio Iglesias—even though it did come in a distant second to the UCR.⁶¹ This victory of Cafiero over the team of Herminio Iglesias in 1985 launched with vigor the movement to renovate the PJ, displaced the old guard of Peronism, and moved the image of the party itself very clearly upward, eliminating the troublesome very-low. Locating the party on the moderate-low made it more competitive facing the UCR. Thus, the *Renovadores* (Renovators) distanced themselves from Peronism’s crude, ultra-plebeian, at times ruffian, and also plebiscitarian traditions and cultivated a more “civilized,” “professional,” procedurally-oriented, and liberal democratic image—which earned them the nickname “suit and tie Peronism.”

By 1987, the Renovators were in full control of the party apparatus, and Cafiero appeared almost certain to become Argentina’s next president in 1989. In 1987, under Cafiero, the now united, modernized and renovated PJ, much nearer the divide on the high-low axis as well as on the center-left, defeated the UCR by 41.5% of the vote to 37.3%. In line with Downsian logic, the party system had clearly *converged* toward the center, *especially* on the high-low dimension, the central and most meaningful political

dimension of Argentina. While Alfonsín at the beginning of the 1980s had made the UCR more competitive with regard to Peronism, in the mid-to-late 1980s Cafiero had made the PJ look much more like Alfonsinism. On the left-right axis, it could be argued that Cafiero was also somewhat to the center-left of a centrist Alfonsín in the mid-to-late 1980s.

Despite those new strategic transformations in terms of political positioning on the part of the parties' leaderships, making each party more acceptable to the historical social basis of the other, Peronism and radicalism maintained markedly different social bases and sociocultural profiles. Whereas the UCR remained a predominantly middle-class party, the PJ continued to draw its support primarily from the working and lower classes (Ostiguy 1998). And despite the PJ Renovation's recent "upward" shift, a wide sociocultural gulf continued to separate the two parties. Backed by students, intellectuals, and the educated middle classes in general, Alfonsín emphasized liberal-high issues such as human rights, due process, and republican institutions. He also appointed a large number of intellectuals to governmental positions. Attendance at Peronist rallies continued to be by the same lower- and working-class crowd, despite Cafiero being certainly less captivating for this audience than more typical Peronist orators. Therefore, even though appeals matter, especially in strategic behavior, it is clear that followers identify *not only with leaders but with one another*, as part of a movement. In the two years between 1985 and 1987, the nature of the respective movements had not, yet, been altered.

In the PJ, the Renovators not only coexisted with competitors on their lower flank but were in fact ultimately defeated by them. In the first open primary of Peronism, in 1988, Carlos Menem, presenting himself as an outsider from a far-flung province, with no support from the party apparatus, located himself very deliberately and credibly on the very-low, to challenge Cafiero and his second, De la Sota, within the Peronist electorate. He adopted a (credible) very lower-class and nativist image, toured the slums and remote areas of the hinterland, had physical contact with the *humildes* (humble, poor people). Against all odds, especially from an institutionalist standpoint, and surprising the serious press, Menem defeated Cafiero. Although vague on policy matters, Menem's sociocultural position had been unmistakable. This was seen in his enormous sideburns

and traditional poncho, which he donned as the self-proclaimed reincarnation of Sarmiento's Facundo. Dressed in leather, Menem rode through impoverished neighborhoods standing atop a garbage truck draped with Argentine flags. Mothers swarmed the truck, lifting children to Menem for his blessing (Cerruti 1993: 241). Invoking the Virgin and Perón, Menem asserted that he was putting "one ear on the heart of the People and listening with the other to the voice of God" (Cerruti 1993: 236). For many, Menem was an old-style caudillo from a backward province who appeared crude, self-contradictory, irresponsible, and even circus-like. Menem in 1988 appalled "serious" people on the high and, as "Carlitos," enthralled Peronists on the low.

The mistake of Cafiero had been to already position himself against the Radicales for the presidential elections of 1989, *assuming* that he could not really be challenged from within Peronism, a "verticalist" movement, in light of the strong institutional hold he had on the party apparatus at the time. While located for the electorate as a whole at a median position on the high-low axis, he was off base for the average Peronist voter. Cafiero also probably played "too high" in an effort to demonstrate the credibility of the PJ's new, higher position on political procedure, pluralism, and fairness of play. Menem, on the other hand, was not encumbered by such considerations. He combined all the "leftovers": violent groups from the Peronist right and from the Peronist left; thug-like orthodox Peronists; highly personalistic appeals; calls of redemption; etc.

The 1989 presidential campaign, between Carlos Menem on the very-low, and perhaps right of center, and Eduardo Angeloz, clearly right-of-center and on the high, displayed a spectacular and perhaps unprecedented gap on the high-low axis. This gap was reflected in the widely different social bases of both candidates. Contemporary analysts often forget that the hyperinflationary crisis broke loose *after* the PJ victory in May, during the transition period under a particularly weak lame duck president. Throughout his campaign in late 1988 and early 1989, Menem maintained a caudillistic leadership style (manifested by his campaign slogan "Follow Me"); a nativistic and nationalistic orientation (including vague references to taking back the Malvinas Islands by force); and culturally popular demeanor, taste, and behavior. When the economic crisis acquired significant proportions in the last month or so of the campaign, Menem's political campaign increasingly took on a populist, redemptive and even mystical quality,

while Angeloz distanced himself from Alfonsín, locating himself clearly to the right economically, and emphasizing seriousness and competence to reassure markets.

In contrast to Cafiero's strategy, which fit the theory of convergence toward the center, Menem drastically polarized the electorate in late 1988 and early 1989, locating himself on the extreme-low.⁶² With high levels of mobilization, he defeated the Radicals at the polls. After May 15, the economic and social crisis grew entirely out of control, and it was clear that the future president (not scheduled to take over until December) would have to take very drastic measures, of whatever kind.

The continued centrality of high-low differences in the 1980s can be seen in the fact that alliances or defections across the Peronist/anti-Peronist cleavage remained strikingly infrequent. Despite the fact that left-of-center Peronists like the Renovators had more programmatic affinities with the *Alfonsinista* (Alfonsinist) Radicals and the PJ than with the right-wing sectors of orthodox Peronism, there were remarkably few instances of PJ defections to (or close alliances with) these other progressive forces. Indeed, it was far more common to see figures passing from the Marxian intellectual left to the UCR government than to see public figures passing between the UCR (or, still less, the cultured and "ethical" Socialists) and Peronism. In the same vein, even though the UCeDe and the Peronist right both despised "subversives" and "social democrats," it would never have occurred to orthodox Peronists to align with the UCeDe against the left-of-center tendency that gained control of the PJ in the late 1980s.

THE PARADOX OF MENEMISM: APPEALS, RECEPTION, AND PARTY SYSTEM IN THE 1990s⁶³

The double political spectrum helps to explain a major puzzle in contemporary Argentine politics: working- and lower-class support for Menemism and middle-class opposition to it. As is well-known, the Menem government implemented a set of neoliberal or "Thatcherite" economic policies that ran directly counter to the traditional Peronist program, and which appeared to place the PJ on the right of the party system. Yet Peronism's social and electoral bases remained solidly working class and lower class. At the same time, the UCR and the emerging FREPASO positioned themselves to the left of the PJ in the early and mid-1990s, opposing the bulk of the Menem government's

neoliberal reforms. Yet both of these parties drew the bulk of their support from middle- and upper-middle-class voters who, in many cases, most benefitted from the economic reforms. Paradoxically, then, the popular sectors massively supported the right-wing Menem government, while large sectors of the middle and upper- middle classes opposed it.

This section argues that Menem was able to maintain his lower-class base because, while he did indeed shift markedly to the right, his positioning with regard to the high-low divide remained stable. Although parties such as FREPASO and the UCR positioned themselves to the left of the PJ, their appeals were too on the high to capture a substantial fraction of the traditional Peronist vote (see Figure 7). It also argues that although left-right differences had an important impact on the party system in the early 1990s, FREPASO's consolidation as a high-center party, followed by the formation of the Alliance, showed that the high-low axis remained predominant in Argentine politics.

The Puzzle

A central paradox of Menemism is that the PJ enjoyed the massive support of the lower sectors of society throughout the 1990s, despite the fact that these voters were the *least supportive* of the Menem government's neoliberal policies (Ostiguy 1998: 464–479). At the same time, the bulk of the middle- and upper-middle-class electorate, much of which backed the government's economic policies, remained hostile to Menem and continually voted against the PJ (Ostiguy 1998: 380–391; 471–479). Menem's neoliberal policies and alliance with big business, the UCeDe, and other historical enemies of Peronism led many analysts to expect that the PJ would lose its working- and lower-class base in the 1990s. This did not happen, however. Although many traditional Peronist voters did indeed oppose the Menem program,⁶⁴ the PJ retained the massive support of the poor (Ostiguy 1998).

The PJ's continued lower-class support was not simply a product of a lack of electoral alternatives. Several left-of-center PJ defectors competed for Peronist votes in 1991, including popular union leader Saúl Ubaldini (who ran for governor of Buenos Aires province) and a group of eight PJ congressmen, known as the "Group of Eight," who left the party in 1990 in opposition to the government's economic and human rights

policies. Moreover, the UCR and left-of-center parties such as the PI and the Unidad Socialista (the Socialist Unity alliance, or US) opposed the neoliberal model in the early 1990s. Indeed, Radical leader Raúl Alfonsín created the umbrella Movimiento para la Democracia Social (Movement for Social Democracy, or MODESO) in 1992 in an explicit attempt to win working-class votes. Yet all of these efforts failed to capture working- and lower-class votes. Despite presenting themselves as “true Peronist” alternatives, Ubal dini and, to a lesser extent, the Group of Eight each received barely two percent of the vote in Buenos Aires; and the UCR, PI, and US all failed to expand beyond their traditional middle-class bases.

The Menemist Electoral and Political Coalition

Much research has been expended on the reasons for the political success of policy switches and neoliberal economic reforms of the type carried out by the Menem administration in Argentina. These reasons cover a spectrum that ranges from a “strong state” argument about technocratic insulation (e.g., Haggard and Kaufman 1992:18–37 and 332–350, and 1995:154–59); to the capabilities and effectiveness of a policy network⁶⁵ within the state and the governing coalition (Teichman 2001:15–22), combined with the adaptability of the Peronist party organization and its shift toward clientelistic practices (Levitsky 1998b, 2005); to a bifurcated base of social support pitting a conservative hinterland against an urban working class (Gibson 1997); to actual bargains made with the losers of the reforms (Etchemendy 2001; Murillo 2001 on Argentina after 1992); to the view that the problem is largely a false one, since representation is retrospective in Latin America (Stokes 1999:100) and voters very much liked neoliberalism once it was put into practice (Stokes 2001:138–42). These different explanations, moreover, have been bound up with a range of widely divergent political assumptions about the political cost of those neoliberal reforms, and therefore the levels of opposition that they are bound to awake. Some have assumed that major obstacles must be dealt with by a civilian administration in order to successfully carry out unpopular reforms, especially if they attack the social basis of the governing coalition (e.g., Waterbury 1989; Collier 1992: 136–41 and 156–61; Teichman 2001: 5–9; Murillo 2001). Others have assumed that the problem for an elected government is that of a

typical collective action problem, where the winners of neoliberal policies are diffuse and the gains are long-term, while the losers are concentrated rent-seekers and their losses are short-term (e.g., Bates 1992; Krueger 1993). Others, finally, assume that there are few real obstacles apart from the need of politicians to dissimulate while seeking election (Stokes 1999:104–08), or to realize cognitively, once in power, that “efficiency policies” are best for the people (Stokes 2001:21 and 1999:126–27).

If one takes the perspective that neoliberal reforms carried out by elected governments, and especially by a labor-based party, do face major obstacles to political success, one can identify three general sources of political opposition that would need to be surmounted: rent-seeking oligopolies benefitting from state protection and subsidies; organized labor; and the electorate, especially if the segments affected belong to the traditional basis of the party carrying out the reforms. Concerning the first, Schamis (1999) has provided an empirically convincing analysis of why the top businesses that in the 1980s formed in Argentina the group known as the Captains of Industry (Ostiguy 1990) actually stood to *gain* much from the neoliberal privatization program, despite the fact that a significant portion of those Captains of Industry had been among the main beneficiaries of the *patria contratista* (the ironically termed “contracting motherland”) as rent-seeking oligopolies. Etchemendy (2001), while recognizing the autonomy of the state’s initiative, extends this analysis in a rich empirical way to the tradable sector of the economy and, most importantly, to organized labor. The paradox for me lies at the electoral level.

The object of my contribution is thus specific and regards the issue of *electoral* political support. A major problem with the use of the social scientific term “coalition,” however, is that it is not clear what are the units forming a “coalition”—economic interests, defined from a political-economy logic; organizations, such as trade unions; sets of individuals, who are part of policy networks; regions, such as the hinterland; social groups, such as classes or class fractions; types of voters? Each answer is quite acceptable, but the various ways of identifying and characterizing coalitions are not interchangeable and involve very different research methodologies. However, rather than engaging in a debate about which unit of analysis is the most relevant or “best,” one can perhaps—fully aware of their lack of interchangeability—regard these different

approaches to analyzing “coalitions” as complementary to one another. In contrast to the organizational approach which lends itself very well, epistemologically, to a coalitional framework, in the case of voters, one can only speak metaphorically of “coalitions,” since what is being combined in reality are either *appeals*—and sets of people responding to a given appeal—or, less convincingly, whole sociologically defined groups of voters.⁶⁶

How *electoral* political support for the PJ’s neoliberal reforms is maintained becomes an especially puzzling question considering that, inverting the classic political economy statements mentioned above, Menem’s reforms arguably had specific and short-term winners (e.g., the captains of industry), and diffuse but real losers—especially his own voters. The electoral sociological paradox stated in the previous section is thus in sharp need of explanation. Certainly, machine politics, as richly described by Levitsky (2003, 2001a, 2001b), did play an important material role, as it increasingly supplanted trade unions as the main conveyor belt between Peronist leaderships and the Peronist electorate. Without machine politics, even strongly held identities and political preferences among the popular sectors may disappear.⁶⁷ Still, unemployment and underemployment, which struck mainly among the traditional Peronist base, steadily rose to unprecedentedly high levels, from 13.9% in 1991 to 30.9% in May 1995,⁶⁸ as a product of the reforms. Peronism, however, remained entirely unchallenged throughout the decade within the social sectors most affected by this scourge. Similarly, survey analysis and my own interviews in the field show that a large majority of the lower-sector Peronist electoral base did *not* like those economic reforms, and that it is among that group that one finds the most negative attitude toward the new economic orientation.⁶⁹ If one differentiates by party identity, rather than socioeconomic level, 58% of Peronists preferred the state to be the main regulator of economic activity—the highest percentage by far of the three main families of party sympathizers—and only 39% preferred free enterprise (Equas 31)⁷⁰. In contrast, 55% of Radicals preferred free enterprise and, of course, 75% of UCeDeistas did so. Peronists were thus the *least* supportive of the new economic orientation. The vast majority, however, *did* repeatedly vote for the PJ. Inversely, the middle sectors, where so many of the buyers through newly possible and widespread credit cards and *cuota* systems (payment plans) could be found, and where approval rates for the measures were much higher,⁷¹ by and large did *not* vote

for the leader who had made all those purchases possible. One must thus be very cautious using highly *aggregated* data linking attitudes toward the economic model and voting preferences, as the conclusions are subject to a severe ecological fallacy: though there seems to be a correlation over time, most lower-sector Peronists did not like the economic policies but voted for the PJ; middle- and upper-middle sectors were much more favorable to the new economic orientation but voted for the PJ to a significantly lesser degree than the popular sectors.⁷² My field interviews in the lower-sector areas of the greater Buenos Aires aimed to elucidate the first of these two mirror “contradictions” (Ostiguy 1998: ch. 6).

In Argentina, social-cultural identities (which include significant expressive and normative components) are very important in the “economy of likes and dislikes.” Moreover, especially within the popular sectors, political identities, and most conspicuously Peronist identity, are a major phenomenon.⁷³ This finding may perhaps seem somewhat banal to scholars of political behavior, but it is surprising how little attention it has received in comparative politics, including in discussions of economic reforms, where the influence of political identities on voting tend to be dismissed as “irrational.”⁷⁴ Murillo (2001: 149–52 and 166–72), of course, has emphasized the importance of party loyalty in Argentina in shaping the reaction of trade union leaders to economic reforms that they did not necessarily approve or want. But in contrast to party identities in the US, which have one of the two main parties as their object, the Peronist identity in Argentina refers not only, and perhaps not even mainly, to the Peronist party. Peronism is a *collective* social and political identity. The notion of *movimiento* need not be understood only in organizational terms—i.e., in reference to the political party, the trade unions, the guerrilla groups, the leader—but rather, more significantly and in a fashion closer to that of “social” movement, as a collective, socially differentiated identity oriented toward political, public action. With regard to Peronist identity, the best heuristic analogy is perhaps that of being Catholic: one may not like the current Pope or his policies, but that is not a reason to become Protestant. The logical outcome, in both instances, is of course abstention and disaffection, not “switching.”

This disjuncture between the way people voted and what they thought regarding economic policy suggests that the vote was not centrally a product of a socioeconomic

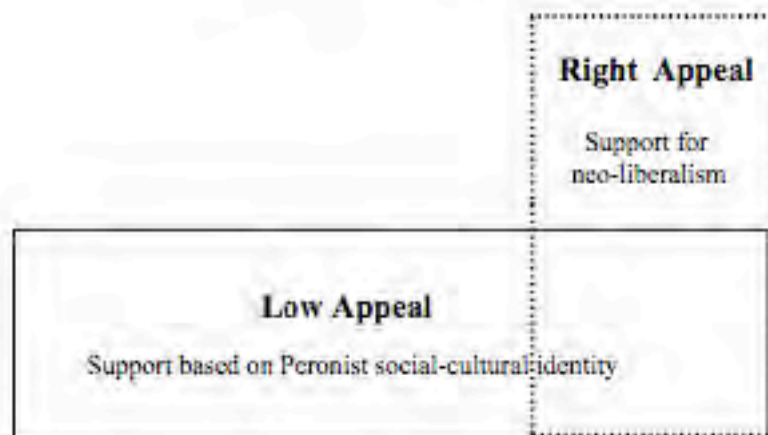
calculation, but rather largely of a strong sociocultural and political identity (see Figure 7).⁷⁵ Thus, the key to Menem's electoral support among the poor was his capacity to remain "Peronist." Because Peronism is, first and foremost, a movement on the low, this meant sustaining a low appeal. My analysis therefore takes the party system and societal cleavages as a fundamental intervening variable within the Argentine polity between preferences, for example on economic policies, and voting. This observation is in line with a society where, as we have seen in this paper, a political divide between Peronism and non-Peronism, and more broadly between high and low, is deeply anchored, carries much historical baggage, and has an emotional charge.⁷⁶

There is little question that, prior to 1989, Menem effectively embodied a discourse and practices that were social-culturally very low. His political style, manners, and ways of addressing and relating to "the people" (*el pueblo*) were "pure Peronism." He further developed this style by visiting people in their own low-income neighborhoods with his "caravans of hope" and later standing on top of the Menemobil, blessing objects given to him by poor people, and making gestures such as hugging his heart. His culturally *popular* and messianic image had a strong resonance among the poor; along the way, it also engendered popular trust in the persona of "Carlitos," as well as a corresponding distrust among the middle class.

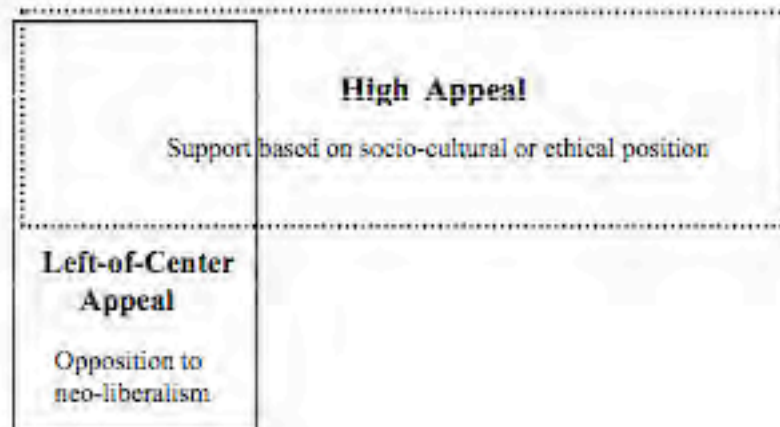
Although Menem abandoned his—admittedly vague and often contradictory—populist socioeconomic discourse after taking office in 1989, *he did not abandon his comparatively low sociocultural discourse and demeanor* (though certain changes did happen in this regard). Although he replaced the poncho with expensive suits,⁷⁷ Menem continued to use a language and demeanor recognizable to all Peronists. The Menem-led PJ remained—much more so than the Renovadores in the late 1980s—solidly within the Peronist "political culture" in terms of its language, its mode of doing politics, its manners and its set of affective symbols. More generally, Menem's appeal on the low, through publicized sociocultural practices (such as playing soccer with "the boys" on television or having manifest "success" with beautiful women) or socioculturally marked political practices⁷⁸ were in line with the very culture of Peronism, and continued to feed a identification between the popular sectors and him. The very actions that so appalled

Figure 7
Political and Electoral Coalitions (1990s)

Menem's Coalition Strategy



Frete Grande/Frepaso Coalition Strategy



well-educated Argentines and led them consider Menem an “embarrassment” (speeding down public highways in his new sports car, with police support; inviting super models and other starlets to the presidential palace) were attractive to many (particularly male) working- and lower-class voters.

Menem also took pains to frame his government project—socioculturally and rhetorically—as distinctively Peronist. For example, in a famous speech to a 1991 party congress in which he explained the neoliberal transformation to his (statist, class-conscious, and nationalist) Peronist followers, Menem declared:

I come to this historic encounter of Justicialist militancy with a profound faith... The National Justicialist Movement was born to change history, not to endure it. [Argentina will] change through our courage, our braveness. Because to liberate our country from backwardness is not a matter of becoming less Peronist, but of becoming more Peronist....

I come here with no intention of speaking in worn-out words or using big words. Or to display theories that have no heart or reason. Argentina is sick of words. Argentina won't be fixed by talk....And like the Perón of 1945, we have no use for dogmatism, for preconceived models, or for ideologies....Today more than ever we must be the anti-system. We need to enter an era of daring transgressions, of truly revolutionary political practices... Is what I'm saying new, or didn't the General Perón express himself this way?

I believe in neither privatization nor statism. I believe in Argentinism. In Argentinism with capital letters. I want to listen to the voice of the people, and this is why I listen to it, because the voice of the people is the voice of God. With the people, with God, and with our fatherland, to triumph, to triumph, to triumph! (1991)

This speech was not about markets or economic policies, but about Peronism and about being credibly on the low politically, including in vocabulary. In sum, if the Menem-led PJ appealed to the socioeconomic right, it never abandoned the low space that Peronism had occupied since the 1940s. Given that high-low differences remain the predominant axis in politics, one could say that in a very important sense, Menem remained solidly “Peronist.”⁷⁹

The fact that the PJ remained solidly on the low had important electoral consequences, for it meant that high parties would have difficulty capturing traditional Peronist votes via socioeconomic appeals. Thus, Alfonsín's Movement for Social Democracy (MODESO), which made an explicitly *socioeconomic* appeal to the working and lower classes, failed to take hold, as did the anti-neoliberal appeals of high left-of-

center parties such as the PI and the US. The salience of the high-low cleavage also helps to explain the failure of the Group of Eight, which, though Peronist (on the very-moderate low), was largely a group of middle-class intellectuals associated with the magazine *Unidos*. Though lower than the UCR and the US, the Group of Eight was nevertheless unable to combine its left-of-center socioeconomic message with a credible appeal on the low. The only political force that made inroads among poor voters was MODIN,⁸⁰ which positioned itself on the extreme low. Founded in 1990 by Carapintada leader Aldo Rico, MODIN was nationalist, nativist, and socioculturally low, as well as anti-neoliberal. Rico cultivated an image as a strong male leader, at ease with guns, and he demarcated himself in public for being crude, “macho,” and at times violent (such as when he threw a rival out of a local party headquarters at gunpoint). Not surprisingly, MODIN aligned with the PJ beginning in 1995.

The key to Menem’s political success, then, was his combination of dissimilar appeals on the low and on the socioeconomic right (see Figure 7). He achieved this by combining the popular appeal of Peronism as a historically *popular* and socio-culturally low identity with the economic policies long demanded by an important sector of the economic elite and the neoliberal right.⁸¹ The dualistic nature of this coalition was reflected graphically in the large “Rally of the Yes,” on April 1990, which is described by Cerruti (1993:331):

Early, *on time*, without organization or supervision, they arrived convoked by the journalists. Entire upper-class families, liberal youth, students of private universities, members of the most renowned clubs of Buenos Aires, businessmen, bankers, ladies of high society. Dressed in the latest fashions, jewels, [and] hats, many left the car parked a few blocks away from the Plaza. *Late*, as always, and as if it was a human flood, the Peronists that were arriving from the Greater Buenos Aires convoked by [Peronist unionist] Luis Barrionuevo came down from the chartered buses. Each group occupied half of the Plaza. They did not talk to each other, they did not chant, they looked at each other with mistrust.

Survey and electoral data demonstrate the socially bifurcated nature of the Menemist political coalition, especially in Capital. Historically, the PJ vote has always varied inversely with income and education levels. Contrary to what several scholars have asserted, this did not change substantially under Menem, except in 1992–93 and only in Capital, when a “U-shaped” type of support occurred (Ostiguy 1998: 357–369).

What did change, therefore, was that the PJ—temporarily—incorporated a significant fraction of the upper-sector vote. Between 1990 and 1994, the overall slope was accordingly less steep than in the past.⁸² But throughout the 1990s, support for the PJ was as always strongest among the poorest and least educated voters (Ostiguy 1998). The upper-sector voters, who migrated from the UCeDe and some conservative provincial parties, were essentially high-right and privileged the economic right's effective reforms over the "propriety" and "decency" of the high.⁸³ In this sense and temporarily, Menemism electorally straddled, in a creative way, the high-low cleavage. To be sure, supporting Harvard-trained economist Domingo Cavallo, the government's economic policy and "Menemism" *despite* Peronism, is not the same thing as supporting Peronism, "our political movement", the party of Perón and Evita, despite a lack of enthusiasm for the new economic and foreign orientation.⁸⁴ Two important caveats should thus be noted about high-*right* support for Menem.⁸⁵ First, it was only of significant electoral consequence in wealthy urban centers, such as the Federal Capital. In the poorer districts of Greater Buenos Aires and peripheral provinces such as Jujuy and Salta, the upper-sector vote never constituted an important part of the PJ's electoral base. Second, the high-*right*/low coalition was short-lived. After 1995, most upper-sector voters defected to high parties such as the Alliance and Domingo Cavallo's Acción por la República, or Action for the Republic. In the second half of the 1990s, Domingo Cavallo, until then largely a technocrat of the type described by O'Donnell (1973) and associated with the economic right and the US, launched himself in electoral politics, mainly in Capital and as the architect of the neoliberal reforms, taking up the space—with his successive political parties—previously occupied by the now defunct UCeDe.⁸⁶

The Anti-Peronist Electoral and Political Coalition Reshaped

Paradoxically, it was the anti-Peronist bloc, rather than the Peronist bloc, that was most dramatically transformed during the 1990s as a product of the neoliberal reforms and Menemism. The crisis of the UCR following 1989 and the party's 1994 decision to make a pact with Menem to reform the constitution weakened the institutional hold of the UCR over the high centrist position it had traditionally controlled. From 1994 to 1997, the

FREPASO competed for that space—a challenge that threatened to reduce the century-old UCR to political insignificance.

This outcome was indeed highly paradoxical: the nucleus of the FREPASO was a *left-of-center* group that split off from *Peronism* in 1991, the Group of Eight. Under the leadership of Peronist deputy and *Unidos* editor “Chacho” Álvarez, the Group of Eight left the Peronist block in opposition to Menem’s absolution of the convicted Generals of the dictatorship and to his sharp neoliberal turn. Instead of the traditional high-low division of Argentine politics, a left-right reorganization of the political field and party system thus became a real historical possibility. As a product of a careful construction of a series of political alliances with other forces, the Group of Eight gave way in 1993 to the Frente Grande (Broad Front, or FG). Had the Frente Grande consolidated itself in a position left of the center (on the left-right axis), but in the center or on the moderate-low of the *high-low* divide, it might have produced clear a realignment of Argentine politics, making the left-right division the primary political divide.

Yet despite its left-of-center Peronist origins, the Frente Grande, which was to give birth to the FREPASO at the end of 1994, neither “normalized” the party system along left-right lines (Abal Medina 1995) nor bridged the high-low divide. The history of this serious attempt to constitute a “transversal” alliance to transform the party system, although somewhat tortuous, ended up conforming and confirming a very clear pattern. The first move in this sequence was by the more moderate Peronist deputies of the Group of Eight, led by “Chacho” Álvarez, who crossed the high-low divide and joined forces with “Democracia Popular,” or “Popular Democracy,” a short-lived group that united members of the human rights movement, such as Graciela Fernandez Mejjide and Aníbal Ibarra (both from Capital), and the fraction of the Christian Democracy also linked with human rights, led by Carlos Auyero (see Appendix). Together, they created the Frente por la Democracia y la Justicia Social (Front for Democracy and Social Justice, or FREDEJUSO). Sectors of the PI, located on the moderate-high and left-of-center, also joined it. Contrary to the expectations of its members, the FREDEJUSO performed very badly in the first national election that followed Menem’s turn-around, in 1991. This debacle convinced Álvarez that they could not win at the polls with a “true Peronist”

appeal, which they had in that election, combined with a left-of-center (and high-of-center) appeal.

For the 1992 election for senator in Capital, a different, this time more leftist, “transversal” alliance performed better, reaping 7.8% of the votes. This Front of the South was led by a movie director involved in the Peronist left during the 1970s, “Pino” Solanas, in alliance with the Communist Party and the more leftist Peronist deputies of the Group of Eight (Appendix). The Front of the South received the support of the FREDEJUSO.

In May 1993, these two “transversal” forces and their respective leaders, “Chacho” Álvarez and “Pino” Solanas, created the Frente Grande, left of center. A very specific location within the double political spectrum had thus been unified and occupied institutionally: the Communist Party, the PI, human rights militants, and left-, as well as left-of-center, Peronists on the moderate-low (see Figure 6 for the spatial location of these specific forces; see Appendix for the institutional construction in that space). In theory, the Frente Grande combined a leftist and a “true Peronist” opposition to Menemism and its “economic and social model.” That united institutional space performed very well electorally in Capital in the October 1993 national elections for deputy, achieving 13.7% of the vote and transforming itself in the third political force of Capital, ahead of Socialist Unity. In more ways than one, the Frente Grande now occupied, both in terms of political position and electoral pull, the space of the PI in the 1980s (Figure 6). It also received its electoral support mainly among the middle sectors. After 1992, Álvarez, Auyero, and Meijide increasingly “centered their critiques on the subordination of Congress by the Executive, the efforts to reform the constitution simply to allow Menem’s reelection, and the degradation of political life by corruption” (Novaro and Palermo 1998:92). “Chacho” Álvarez stated publicly that he was not Peronist anymore and that his purpose was not to build a new Peronist Renovation.

In November 1993, the Radicales, under Alfonsín, signed the Olivos Pact with Menem’s PJ, in order to reform the constitution under specific terms.⁸⁷ Elections for a Constituent Assembly were thus scheduled for April 1994. In this setting, the Frente Grande constituted itself as the main opposition to Menem’s PJ, the UCR having its hands partly tied by the Pact. During those months, the FG moved further and further to

the high, having established a clean break with the Peronist tradition; it also started to moderate its leftist opposition to the economic model. The FG thus clearly shifted its attack on Menemism from socioeconomic to ethical grounds. The FG appeal centered mostly on corruption, as seen in the party's campaign slogan: "Constitution without Mafias." The Frente Grande's appeal was based on republicanism and political liberalism, that is, respect for the division of powers, judicial independence, and clean government. It also included public education. These were issues of serious concern to the (typically high) middle and upper-middle classes, but which—according to surveys—were of less interest to the poor (who were and are concerned about concretely "getting things done" and favor politicians they *feel* close to and can *see* in person). Even the FG's *socioeconomic* discourse involved increasingly moral appeals, rather than hailing the poor themselves. FG leaders referred to the poor in the third person—in sharp contrast to Peronist first-person-plural hailings—or as a symptom of the unhealthy situation created by neoliberalism. Figure 7 illustrates how the FREPASO "coalition" was based on the combination of a high sociocultural appeal (ethics, civic republicanism, institutional integrity) and—albeit decreasingly—a left-of-center socioeconomic appeal. The electoral result was impressive. The FG became the first electoral force in Capital, with 38% of the vote, and, most importantly, established itself as a national force, with 12.7% of the votes. Its strength, however, was still very unevenly distributed nationally, as it was completely absent, for example, in the poorer and less developed Northwest (see Figure 7).

The year 1994 saw a major transformation in the Argentine party system. The Frente Grande became established solidly on the high, originally on a left-of-center position (1993). From there, however, it gradually but very clearly shifted toward the center of the left-right spectrum, increasingly squeezing the UCR out of the position it had historically occupied. Economic stability and privatizations had now also been incorporated in its repertoire. The clear movement of the FG away from the left alienated Solanas and the forces that had constituted the Front of the South, in the process. With the gap widening with rising Álvarez, Solanas left the FG to form the more leftist Alliance of the South, reoccupying the political space that had been left empty by the Frente Grande's continuous move toward the center of the left-right spectrum. The media

came to characterize the Frente Grande as favoring a “clean version” of the economic model and as concerned mainly with “ethical” issues. Novaro and Palermo (1998) accurately describes the Frente Grande’s (and later the FREPASO’s) discourse and political appeals as mainly centered around “republican values,” an Argentine replica of the French discourse of the same name, generally used against right-wing populist demagogues. The family of issues threaded together under that rubric is: respect for the institutional mediations and checks and balances of the Republic (what O’Donnell calls “horizontal accountability”), prevention of abuse of power; the rule of law and equality in front of the law, without impunity; transparency of governmental actions; civic rights and the fostering of a civic morality; political pluralism and public discussions of issues; i.e., overall and in brief, a defense of the institutions of the Republic and their independence, against personalism (see Novaro and Palermo 1998: 91, 96, 122, 127, 134) Needless to say, this republican discourse is clearly on the high, in the political-cultural subdimension. Added to this, the most important leading figures of the FG, such as Graciela Fernández Meijide and Aníbal Ibarra, were also distinctly high in their manners and political styles. The success of the FG within the more educated segments of the urban middle class was thus immense, having now also taken over the space occupied a decade before, around 1983, by Alfonsinism.⁸⁸

Under the leadership of Álvarez, this oppositional FG continued in 1994 its process of institutional expansion and unification. In August 1994, in another—this time more centrist—effort at effecting a “transversal” rupture of the party system, a highly mediatized meeting took place at the Café Molinos between Álvarez (FG), Federico Storani (or the progressive, moderate-low faction of the UCR –Figure 6), and Octavio Bordón, the Peronist governor and then senator for Mendoza, located on the very-moderate low, on the center of the left-right spectrum. By the end of the year, Storani had decided to remain in the UCR, challenging the official candidate of the UCR for the presidential nomination. However, a major institutional development was the defection of Bordón from the PJ, forming a group called Política Abierta para la Integridad Social (Open Policy for Social Integrity, or more significantly PAIS, or “country”). In December 1994, the FREPASO was born, encompassing in a single party the Frente

Grande, Bordón's PAIS, and the one remaining significant force on the (very-) high-left, the Socialist Unity (Figures 6 and 8; Appendix).

An open primary quickly took place between Álvarez (on the high, still somewhat left of center) and Bordón, in a centrist position in both dimensions. Contrary to expectations and to what an institutional perspective would have led us to predict,⁸⁹ Bordón won those primaries and therefore became the presidential candidate of the FREPASO, which had now taken over the Frente Grande. The victory of Bordón over Álvarez in the February 1995 presidential primaries completed this shift away from the left. By the 1995 presidential election, the FREPASO had thus completely dropped its opposition to the core elements of the neoliberal model (including privatization, trade liberalization, and the Convertibility Plan) and focused almost all of its attention on public mores, clean and ethical government, civil liberties, respect for republican institutions and the division of power: it was now an ex-radical civic union. Bordón, Menem's main political adversary in the race, obtained 29.2% of the votes, well before the UCR's candidate, Horacio Massaccesi, who came a distant third with 17% of the vote. In the vote for deputies, which is less centered on personalities, the UCR and the FREPASO were neck to neck at the national level, with each around 21% of the vote.

Figure 8 summarizes the above discussion by presenting the Argentine political map in a dynamic fashion for the early to mid-1990s. It shows the evolution of what became the FREPASO from the Peronist center-left (Group of Eight) in 1990, to the *high* center-left (FG) in 1993; and then, along the high, toward the center on the left-right axis (FREPASO) in 1994–95.

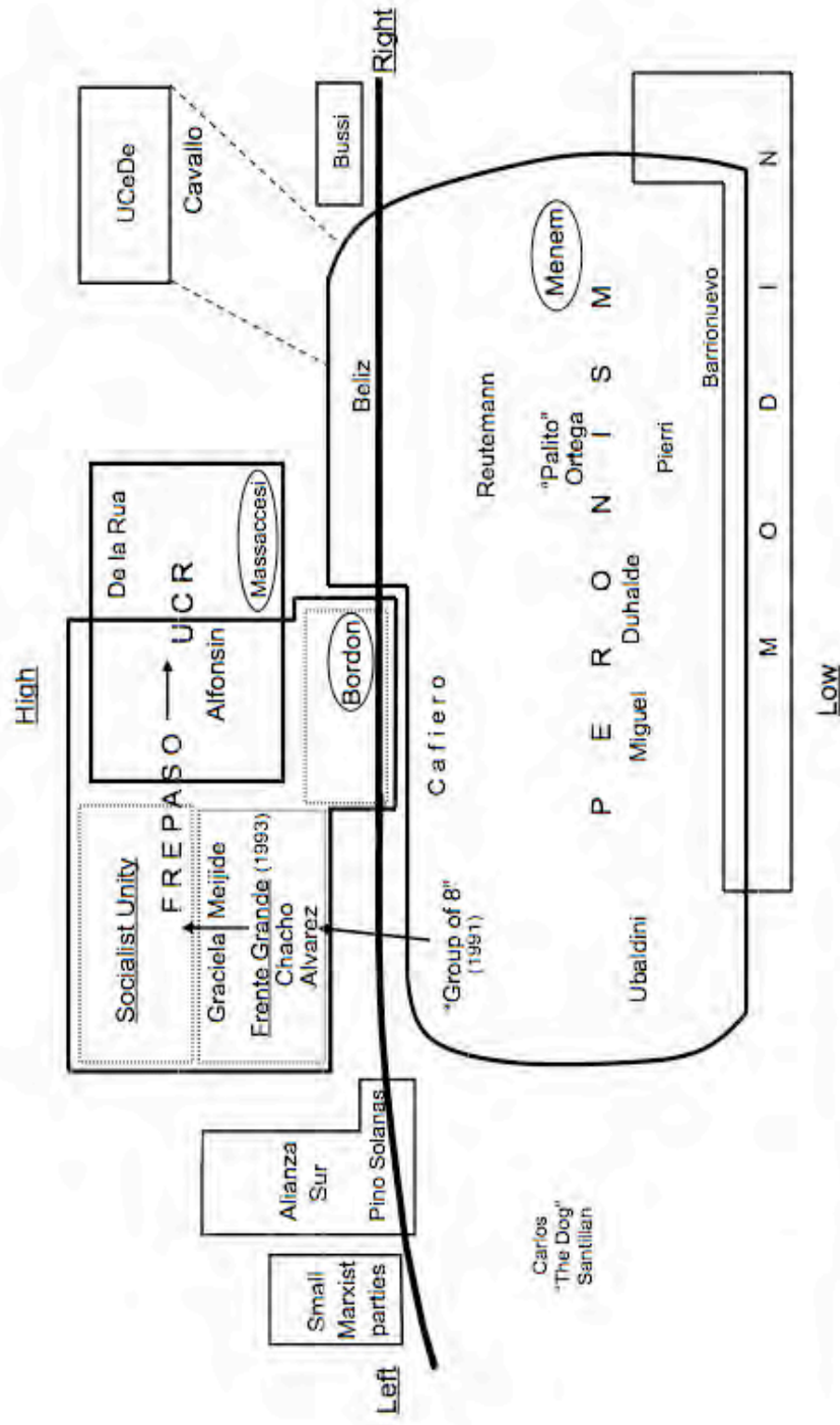
The high center-left, high center strategy was thus enormously successful. The FG/FREPASO increased its vote share from four percent in 1993 to 30 percent in the 1995 presidential election, and it became the dominant political force in Federal Capital. This success was clearly made possible by the party's high-center appeal. The party's vote was concentrated in wealthy urban centers, particularly Federal Capital. It is well known that the capital is socioculturally distinct from much of the rest of the country. It has significantly higher levels of wealth and education, less caudillismo, and a more cosmopolitan orientation. Indeed, Capital has often been accused of being "Europeanizing," of not being "truly Argentine," and, most of all, of being snobbish

toward the (more “folksy”) rest of the country. Moreover, survey and electoral data show that the FG/FREPASO performed best in middle- and upper-middle-class neighborhoods (and worst in the slums), and that support for the party was *particularly* high among those with the *highest level of education*.⁹⁰ This means that in socioeconomic and educational terms, FREPASO’s electoral base was very similar to the high-center UCR (e.g., Alfonsinism). Rather than crosscutting the high-low divide, then, FREPASO ended up reinforcing it.

Figure 8 also shows the very-low position of MODIN, which did successfully capture traditional Peronist votes, in contrast to the US or the FG, which did not. Despite Menem’s clear positioning on the right, the PJ remained quite heterogeneous. It included Ubaldini on the low center-*left*,⁹¹ old guard union leader Lorenzo Miguel and Buenos Aires governor Eduardo Duhalde in the low center, and newer leaders such as Alberto Pierri and Santa Fe governor Carlos Reutemann on the center-right.

Figure 8

The Double Political Spectrum in the mid-1990s



* : Arrows represent movement over time. The main candidates of the 1995 presidential elections have been circled.

BACK TO THE PAST: THE PARTY SYSTEM IN THE LATE 1990s

If the high-low cleavage had shown some signs of breaking down in the early 1990s, by the end of the decade it had reasserted itself with full vigor. In October 1995, Meijide was elected senator for Capital with a strong 46% of the vote. Elections were then scheduled in Capital for June 1996 to elect the Capital's intendant, or chief of government.⁹² Bordón wanted to nibble at the Peronist coalition by having Gustavo Beliz, a Peronist clearly right of center but on the very-moderate low (Figure 8), run for the FREPASO. The FREPASO, however, had previously agreed internally to have the socialist La Porta, clearly left of center and *very-high*, run for this office. The euclidian political distance between the two potential candidates was thus very large. Not surprisingly, severe tensions arose. The militants of the Frente Grande and the Socialist Unity in the FREPASO clearly sided with La Porta, with the backing of Meijide, also on the high center-left. Bordón thus became isolated within the FREPASO, and slammed the door, never to come back.⁹³ Bordón had been correct, however: La Porta, on the very-high left, was positioned too far from the center of even Capital's political space. La Porta lost the Capital's election to the eternal rival of Alfonsín within the UCR, the also very-high but center/center-right Radical de la Rúa. It was the first positive political news, and comeback, for the UCR in the 1990s.

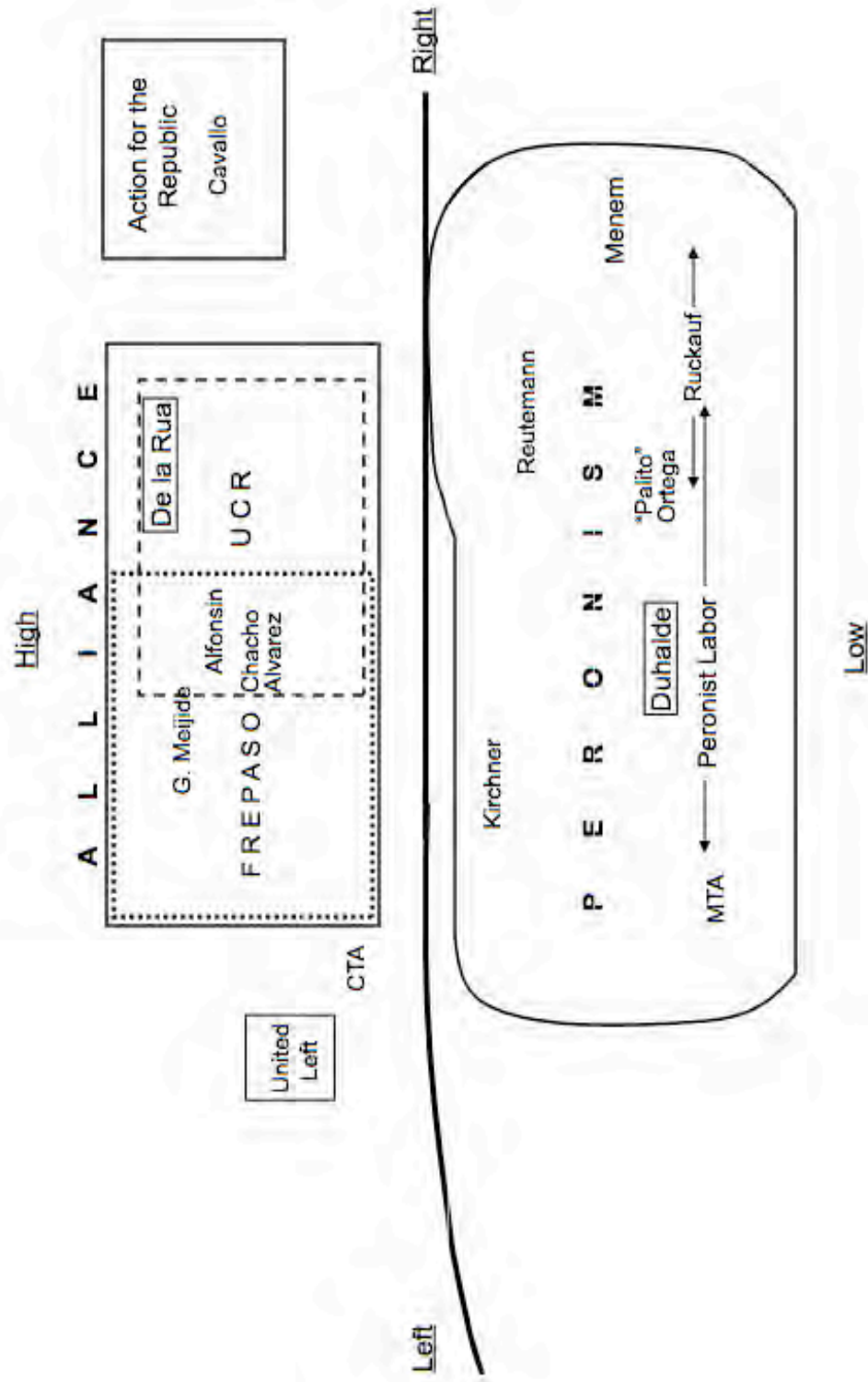
The sharp lesson from the 1995 presidential election was that a divided opposition—the UCR and the FREPASO—was the best way to ensure the continuity of the PJ in power. In contrast to Mexico, where the Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party, or PAN) and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution, or PRD) stood quite far apart on the left-right axis, arguably one on either side of the PRI, the FREPASO and the UCR, as we have seen, were occupying almost the same political space in 1996 (Figure 9)—or at least, significantly overlapped. For the 1997 national elections for deputies, the UCR and FREPASO did the only rational thing: they joined their organizations and ran together under the banner of the Alianza. The effort paid off: for the first time since 1989, Menem's PJ lost the elections. The Alianza therefore set its sights on the 1999 presidential elections.

As in 1995, when Bordón and Álvarez joined forces, an open primary was necessary to decide from which of these two now major political parties, the UCR and the FREPASO, the leader of the Alianza, and therefore Argentina's likely next president, would come. The primaries were set for November 1998: the FREPASO backed Graciela Mejjide, and the UCR, Fernando de la Rúa. Both candidates were very much on the high, but Mejjide still had a left-of-center image, while de la Rúa was clearly right of center. Actually, while the key figure of Alfonsín was inside the area of political overlap between the UCR and FREPASO, de la Rúa was outside of it, on the right (Figures 8 and 9). With 64% of the vote, the Radical de la Rúa won an overwhelming victory over the Frepasista Mejjide. As in 1995, a candidate of the high center-left had difficulty imposing herself in an open primary as the presidential candidate. While many had been forecasting the disappearance of the UCR at the hands of the FREPASO in a struggle for the same "share" of political space, the UCR was now back in strength, as the senior partner of the coalition most likely to win the presidency. Paradoxically, the FREPASO, which had begun left of center as the FG (and even as left-of-center Peronists) and had been in clear opposition to the right represented by Menemism, was now the junior partner of a coalition supporting a high-right presidential candidate!

In the meantime, a deadly struggle for the PJ presidential candidacy developed between Menem and Duhalde. Legally, Menem was barred by the Constitution he himself had negotiated from running for a third consecutive presidential term. As a leading candidate on the low, however, such "legal niceties" were not a major impediment for Menem (as they certainly were not at the time for Fujimori in Peru). For the PJ, the major party on the low, primaries, which must be accompanied by proceduralism and the rule of law, are only one political option among many for settling political differences. Much as had occurred in the 1970s, but without the violence, severe political infighting took place within Peronism to settle the issue. Politically, Duhalde was more of a centrist and "classical" Peronist, thus spatially to the left of right-wing Menem. After much difficulty and very late in the game, Duhalde, weakened by the internal conflict, became the PJ's presidential candidate. The PJ was thus led by a centrist politician on the low.

Figure 9

The Double Political Spectrum at the end of the 1990s



A highly paradoxical situation therefore developed for the 1999 presidential elections. While high-low differences were now particularly wide, de la Rúa's socioeconomic platform now placed him somewhat *to the right* of the Peronist Duhalde, who had emerged as a critic of the neoliberal model (Figure 9). But overall, the Alliance and PJ differed little on socioeconomic issues. The left-right partisan differences, which were real in the early 1990s and had created a *diagonal*, high-left versus low-right, axis of political conflict, had again largely disappeared in the 1999 presidential elections.

However, a very wide gap—not unlike that between Menem and Angeloz ten years earlier in 1989—separated Duhalde and de la Rúa on the high-low axis. Duhalde had risen within Peronism through his success in the impoverished second belt of the Greater Buenos Aires, where particularly rough political methods prevail, physical intimidation is common, and where he had built a strong political machine (see Levitsky 2003). Duhalde had the image of a plain “man of the people,” at ease culturally with workers and poor people. De la Rúa, a man of Capital, was very restrained and proper in his demeanor, thought of himself as “boring” (in contrast to Menem), believed in the legitimacy of the law, and had the image of an “effete,” on the very high.

All major parties differentiated themselves in the 1999 presidential elections primarily along the high-low divide in politics. The Alliance and Cavallo's Action for the Republic adopted classically high profiles. Alliance campaign posters called “For a serious country: Enough of Menem,” while Cavallo's quoted Sarmiento. The Alliance promised an “ethical shock,” and Alliance vice presidential candidate Chacho Álvarez declared that the Alliance sought to “adopt the *institutional norms* of the *First World*.”⁹⁴ Duhalde, by contrast, maintained a profile much more on the low, aligning with the ultra-low Aldo Rico and campaigning against *portenos*⁹⁵ who “treat us like Indians.”⁹⁶

Because of its composition, the new Alliance coalition thus became a broad *left-right coalition of the high*. Peronist politicians were therefore quick to compare the Alliance to the Democratic Union of 1946 (see the inside part of the circle in Figure 4). Much like the Democratic Union, the Alliance included left-of-center social-democrats (such as the Socialists and many FG militants), centrist radicals, and conservative provincial parties. And what united these political forces, as in 1946, was a socioculturally high profile, a politico-culturally high discourse (about institutions,

norms, civic public life, the Republic), and a predominantly middle- and upper-middle-class base. On the low, Peronism continued to have significant left-right differences, as well.

In sum, Argentine politics appears to have gone full circle during the 1990s. A Peronist left opposition to Menem gradually moved to the high left, and then to the high center. With the formation of the Alliance and the election of the high center-right de la Rúa, anti-Peronism again then shifted to the right of (post-Menemist) Peronism (Figure 9). The situation was in many ways comparable to that depicted in Figure 6 (the 1980s), except that the center of gravity of the space had shifted somewhat to the right. The Alliance maintained roughly the same profile as the *combination* of the UCR, the PI, and the Socialists in the 1980s (Figure 6). Cavallo's Action for the Republic replaced the UCeDe on the high right. The PJ remained heterogeneous, although its left wing, represented by politicians such as Santa Cruz governor Nestor Kirchner and unions such as the—lower—Movimiento de Trabajadores Argentinos (Argentine Workers Movement, or MTA), was *weaker* in 2001. Throughout the 1990s, the high-low dimension remained the main divide of political conflict. Not only that, but this divide remained, and remains, associated with socially differentiated, or “class-based,” political preferences.

POSTSCRIPT: ARGENTINA'S STRUCTURED POLITICAL SPACE IN THE 2000s

1999–2002

History of course does not stop, and since the first versions of this paper in 2000–02, the economy, under de la Rúa and his neoliberal economic ministers, melted down—strongly affecting the party system, but *not* the structured political space—but also recovered in the following years. A new cycle of efforts at transforming the party system, within a context of severe delegitimization of politicians, began in 2003. As yet another tribute to the robustness of the double political spectrum, the structure of the Argentine political space remains *intact*, despite what are otherwise earth-shattering phenomena and transformations.

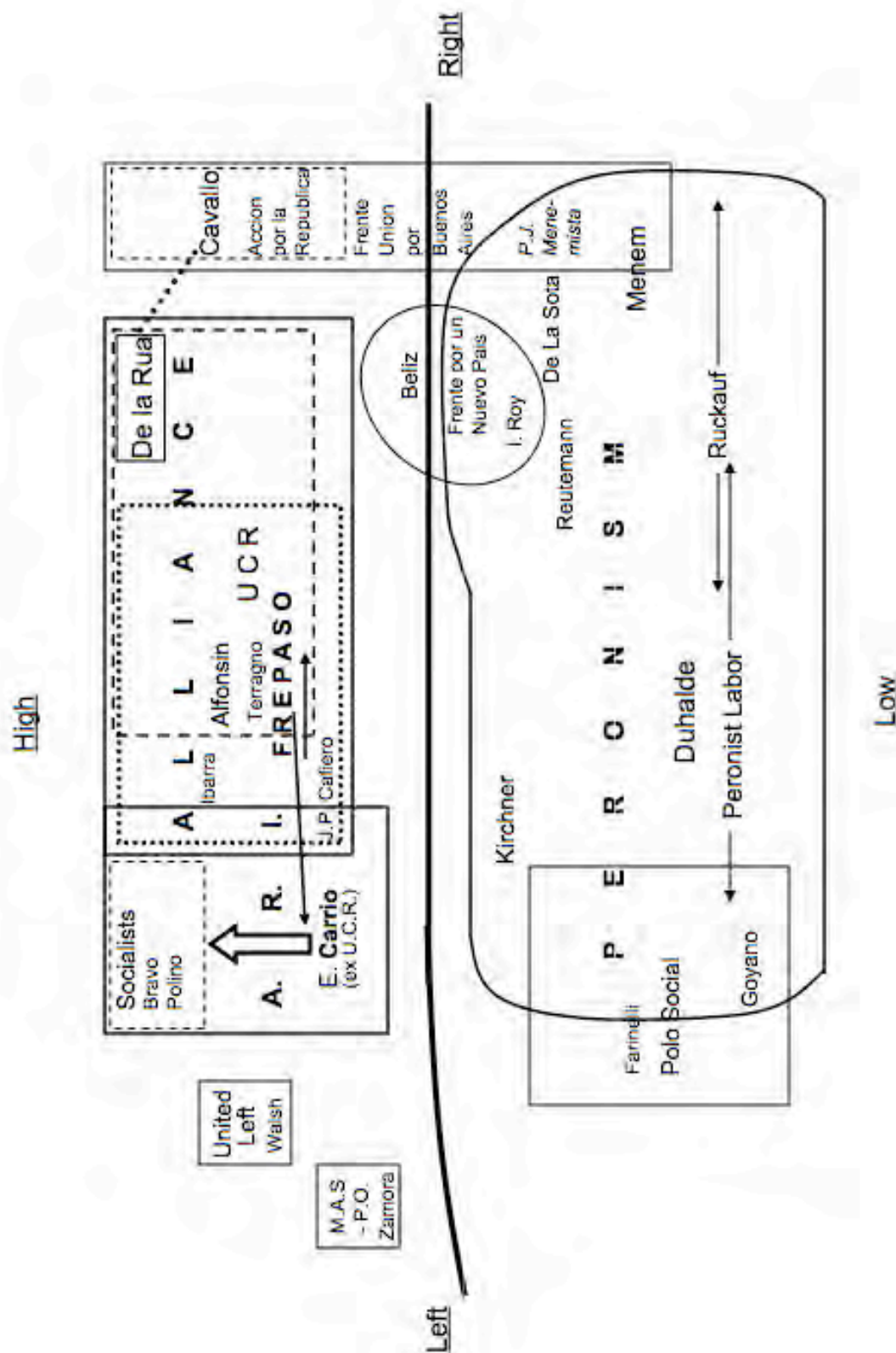
Between 1991 and 2001, the “rotation” described above in the main axis of political conflict, not unlike the rotation described for the 1940s regarding *both* the high and the low, *continued* moving *clockwise*. President de la Rúa first chose a moderate economist (linked to Alfonsinism) as his minister of economy. He then replaced him with an ultra-orthodox neoliberal economist, also from the Radical party but obviously on its right: Ricardo López Murphy. López Murphy was a graduate in economics from Chicago, had advised Angeloz (Figure 6), and was a consultant for the powerful and conservative Fundación de Investigaciones Económicas Latinoamericanas (Foundation for Latin American Economic Research, or FIEL). With the economy driven more and more into recession under orthodox fiscal policies, de la Rúa then appointed as his minister of economy a figure outside of the Alliance and to its right: the “eternal” Domingo Cavallo! Cavallo, as is well known, had been Menem’s main minister of economy and the architect of the neoliberal reforms and economic stabilization. In the 1999 presidential elections, Cavallo had run as the leader of the high right party he had just founded—Action for the Republic—receiving a total of 10% of the national vote. By 2000, it seemed that whatever the political force in power, Cavallo always ended up minister of economy. Indeed, Cavallo has now been a top civil servant for the three main historical political actors of Argentina: the military under the B-A regime, in 1981; the Peronists, under Menem; and the Radicales, under de la Rúa. But like the UCeDe, he had,

of course, never been able to win a large fraction of the vote on his own or based on his—very clear—programmatic position.

With the tandems de la Rúa-López Murphy and then de la Rúa-Cavallo standing for orthodox neoliberalism and big business, and with cases of corruption not being dealt with firmly by the president, a situation clearly similar to that of the early 1990s developed. And indeed, dissatisfaction predictably grew within the left of the Alliance. The emptied political space on the high left, created by the notable move of the Alliance's leader to the right, was in due time in the 2000s filled by a new organizational actor, called *Alternativa para una República de Iguales* (Argentina for a Republic of Equals, or ARI). This new party was manned mainly by left-dissidents of the FREPASO, especially from the ex-Frente Grande and the Socialist Parties. Its leader, however, was a then little-known progressive radical, Elisa Carrió, who broke from the voting block of the Alianza in Congress on ethical and anti-corruption issues. She joined forces with the very-high-left socialist Alfredo Bravo. ARI was somewhat vague on economic programs (although it definitely claims to be “progressive”) and, like the FG in 1994, had its clear trademark in anti-corruption and ethical—“high”—issues. It was in fact a combination of the moderate-high and very-high center-left, just like in 1993–94 (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Argentine Political Space, Elections 2001



The clockwise movement of the main axis of conflict, as expected, was not limited to the high but simultaneously occurred on the low (just as it had in the 1940s). After de la Rúa resigned at the end of 2001, power was transferred to Peronism, on the other side of the divide. And Peronism chose as the new president of the country Adolfo Rodríguez Saá. Rodríguez Saá, in contrast to his predecessors, adopted a nationalist, left—and to some, demagogical—discourse, and attempted to act as a strong man. One of his first measures was to have Argentina default on its large foreign debt (something Cavallo had attempted to avoid at absolutely all costs), which he did with nationalist pride. While Menem had led the PJ clearly from the right during the entire 1990s, the PJ now became led, even if briefly, from the nationalist left. Some skeptical Peronist deputies disparagingly compared Rodríguez Saá to Hugo Chávez. Argentine politics had therefore gone an entire, *full circle* from 1988–89, with Menem defeating Angeloz (on the high-right), to 2001, with Rodríguez Saá replacing de la Rúa (on the high-right). The high-low divide, however, had remained intact. An alliance between the forces of Rodríguez Saá and the ARI, both clearly left of center, was as unthinkable as, in 1945, an alliance between Perón’s Laborists and the Socialists. And indeed, Rodríguez Saá came to ally, instead, with Aldo Rico on the low. Needless to say, the ARI came to be very popular among the middle sectors, while Rodríguez Saá was then very popular among the popular sectors.

De la Rúa’s years in government were odd in many ways. He faced his most important political opposition from the left of his own Alliance. On the other hand, he received support from actors who were not part of his party or coalition: most clearly Cavallo, but also, behind the scenes, from Menem, on Peronism’s right. Writing an earlier version of this text in 2003, I predicted that no doubt analysts would then forecast for the current decade the creation of significant “transversal” alliances and the radical transformation of Argentina’s political space (basically along the left-right axis)—a change which occurred no more in this current decade than it did in the wake of similar developments in the early 1990s, in the late 1950s with Frondizismo or, with regard to high and low in politics, in the mid-1940s.

On the low and to the left of Peronism, a new political actor, called the Social Pole, also emerged (Figure 10). It proved, however, very difficult to build any bridges

between the Social Pole and ARI, both left of center. ARI clearly stood for civic republicanism, a certain kind of protest, the struggle against corruption, as well as “progressivism,” whereas the Social Pole was concerned “in the first person” with the social plight of the poor, as was Ubaldini in the 1980s. Their electorates are correspondingly very different.

Like a decade before in the case of the Frente Grande, Elisa Carrió built bridges in 2002 with leaders of the “pure left,” on the high of the divide, such as, this time, Luis Zamora, an ex-Trotskyite bookseller and human rights lawyer (instead of the Communist Party and Graciela Fernandez Meijide, as in 1992–93). As in the mid-1990s, there was also a certain overlap, politically, between the ARI and the progressive wing of the Radicales. Carrió herself was a Radical deputy from the Chaco, *before* the UCR joined the Alianza. Although the FREPASO and, one decade later, the ARI, both focus heavily on republican issues, they have also each been associated with a given tandem of public figures: the duo Bravo-Carrió took over the duo Álvarez-Meijide.

De la Rúa, as incapable of mastering the economy in times of crisis as was his Radical predecessor Alfonsín twelve years before, resigned at the end of December 2001, after a series of riots. After the short-lived Peronist presidency of Rodríguez Saá, Eduardo Duhalde, the loser of the 1999 presidential elections but nonetheless a central and weighty figure within Peronism, became president of Argentina. With de la Rúa eliminated, Alfonsín also again became the central figure of the UCR and, as he had done with Menem in 1994, gave Duhalde his political support, invoking the country’s stability (also reflecting his awareness of the UCR’s very weak electoral position).

2002–2005⁹⁷

Between December 2001 and early 2003, Argentina made world headlines with the collapse of the government of President Fernando de la Rúa, the rapid succession of three presidents,⁹⁸ the bankruptcy of the banking system and the state’s fiscal crisis, the widespread rejection of the political class with the slogan “Get Rid of Them All,” the waves of protest and the explosion of social movements, associations, and protest movements, distant from the state and critical not only of neoliberalism but of the monetized market economy as well. This crisis, the worst of which lasted about two

years, was however perhaps just as remarkable as the illusion of drastic change perceived by numerous analysts. Besides the immediacy of the banking and employment situation, there had been a strong disillusionment from many engendered by Menemist Peronism and, as significantly, by the failure of the long process of construction of an institutional opposition led by the FREPASO, which had resulted in the formation of the *Alianza*, in De la Rúa's presidency, and finally in a resounding economic, political, and ethical collapse, thus exhausting all possible political alternatives within the party system. The logical result was the rejection of the political class altogether.

In 2002 and 2003, however, in a context of weakened popularity of politicians and under the aegis of Peronist interim president Eduardo Duhalde and of his Minister of Economy Roberto Lavagna, the state's coffers were replenished little by little, order was slowly reestablished, and the oppositional social movements were treated with a combination of repression and cooptation. One cannot overemphasize the abnormality of the urgent situation that had erupted under De la Rúa and that was then subsequently and slowly diffused during the interim presidency of Duhalde (himself a very pragmatic man, a sort of "Peronist *puntero*"⁹⁹ on a grand scale).

In a beautiful way in terms of this paper, as a hotly contested game was going on in late 2002 *within Peronism* to decide who was going to lead the PJ when Duhalde would come to the end of his interim presidency, every one of the four corners of the Peronist political space had a contending candidate: Kirchner was running on the high-left of Peronism; de la Sota on the high-right of Peronism; Rodríguez Saá on the low-"left"; and Menem was attempting a comeback, on the low-right (see also Figure 10 and, for 2003, Figure 11). The future leader of the PJ was unquestionably going to be Argentina's next president.

Figure 11 illustrates the fortuitous or, rather, unplanned circumstances¹⁰⁰ that moved the entire Peronist movement *leftward*, with Kirchner. Duhalde, between 1998 and 2004, was Peronism's strong man—though he was himself not running in the upcoming elections. He was located approximately in the center of the Peronist political space. His first choice for the presidential candidacy was Governor Carlos Reutemann, a center-right Peronist. This ex-Formula One champion, who had become the Peronist governor of Santa Fe and entered politics under Menem's wing, declined. Duhalde then

set his sights on Juan Manuel de la Sota, governor of Córdoba and also right of center. But de la Sota was too much on the high for Peronism and, on economic issues, not very different from Menem; his campaign in any case failed to take off. It was only as a third choice that Duhalde threw his weight behind Néstor Kirchner, governor of Santa Cruz, in the hopes of thwarting the inexhaustible ambitions of Carlos Menem.

To crown this analysis, surveys showed that Rodríguez Saá (on the low left-of-center) *and* Menem (on the low right) *both* received greatest political support from the poorest and less educated lower-sector voters. Kirchner (on the moderate-low, left-of-center) and de la Sota (on the center of the high-low divide, right-of-center) were more popular among middle social sectors. Congruent with this framework, Rodríguez Saá made an alliance with Aldo Rico, on the very-low, and Hugo Moyano, a teamster on the very-low center-left (Figure 10). Pierri (Figure 8), on the low right, fittingly gave his support to Menem.

At first glance, the crisis of 2001–03 could be interpreted as having led to the fragmentation or implosion of the Argentine party system.¹⁰¹ Witness the unheard-of fact that in the April 2003 presidential elections, five candidates, three of whom were Peronists, ran simultaneously, all independently of one another.¹⁰² The Argentine party system has historically been characterized as bipartisan,¹⁰³ but in the 2003 elections the UCR candidate was *not* among the pack of five.¹⁰⁴ There were, moreover, not one but three Peronist candidates, Carlos Menem, Néstor Kirchner, and Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, all conducting ruthless presidential campaigns with autonomous organizations, with alliances between Peronist and non-Peronist candidates theoretically as possible as between Peronist candidates.

However—and fundamentally—the *two-dimensional* Argentine political space remained spectacularly unchanged. It even displayed a remarkable continuity, as was also the case before and after the military dictatorships of 1976–83 and 1966–73, and before and after the hyper-inflationary crisis of 1989 with Menem's swerve to the right. In fact, if the Argentine bipartisan system has fragmented or imploded, it is within an especially stable two-dimensional political space. Positions in the two-dimensional Argentine political space are in fact far more stable than the partisan institutions themselves, which

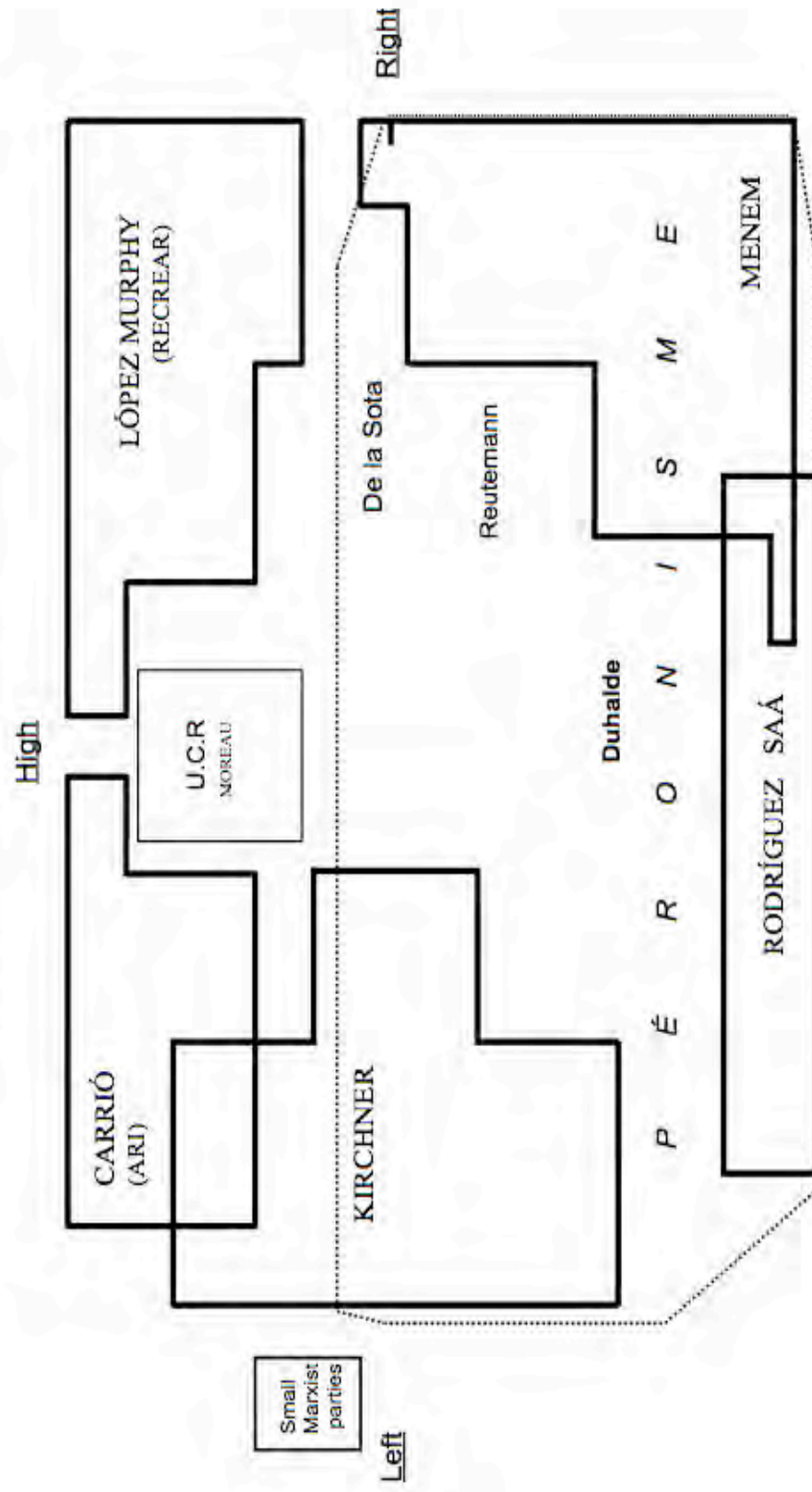
come and go. A position that is abandoned within this two-dimensional space leads, after a few years, to the *creation* of a new partisan actor to fill that political void.¹⁰⁵

Figure 11 represents the position of the five main candidates in the April 2003 presidential elections, with three Peronists (Rodríguez Saá, Menem, and Kirchner), and two non-Peronists (López Murphy and Carrió). Menem and Rodríguez Saá are the most on the low, with Menem clearly to the right of Rodríguez Saá. Carrió and López Murphy, both of Radical origin, are the most on the high. Carrió, moreover, also established her distinctive mark, like the FREPASO of 1994–95 before her, as being on the “high” on questions of ethics, transparency, and respect for the law. Carrió was then situated relatively to the left, having experienced her period of greatest growth while allied with the socialist Alfredo Bravo. As for López Murphy, he sought to represent a serious and decent neoliberal right (corresponding to a certain image of developed countries), fully respecting the separation of powers, the smooth functioning of republican institutions, and the rule of law, in contrast to the shenanigans, extravagance, and populism of Menem. Kirchner was then the only presidential candidate to straddle the political cleavage between the high and low in Argentina—something that has definitely changed since. Although a Peronist, like his center-right Peronist colleague De la Sota, he was then arguably situated on the moderate high. From the moderate-high and the center-left, he was then in an excellent position to attract the progressive and urban middle-class republican vote, as he partially did in 2003 and especially in 2005. The competition that originally pitted the Peronist Kirchner against the non-Peronist Carrió in 2003 for this same educated, center-left, and middle-class electorate was unavoidable but short lived.

On the left-right axis, López Murphy and Menem clearly represented the right. López Murphy was perceived as a *gorila*¹⁰⁶ by the Peronists, while Menem was ever more linked to the popular conservatism of the country’s interior or hinterland. Kirchner and Carrió, meanwhile, were left of the center. The latter, far to the high, attracted then a non-Peronist progressive vote. As for Rodríguez Saá, he remained difficult to classify along the left-right axis in 2003; emphasizing the “national and popular,” he placed himself very low in the Peronist tradition.

Figure 11

The Argentine Political Space, May 2003 Elections



.....: Political space covered by Peronism. -- : High-low cleavage in Argentine politics. The main presidential candidates are in capital letters. The boxes around their names delineate the political space they cover.

With this very high number of five viable presidential candidates, each attempting to *differentiate* himself as much as possible from the others, the center of the two-dimensional political space remained notably vacant. Figure 11 allows us to visualize a circle formed by the five candidates at the outer perimeter of the two-dimensional space, with each one accenting his uniqueness.¹⁰⁷ Somewhat in the center of the Peronist space we find Duhalde, who indeed played the role of kingmaker in the presidential race among the Peronist candidates. This situation is thus the exact opposite of that in the 1980s, where the two principal political forces *converged* on the center of the two-dimensional space, under the leadership of the Peronist Cafiero and the Radical Alfonsín.

With these respective positions, illustrated in Figure 11, the logical possibilities of alliances in 2003 were numerous, particularly in prevision of a second round: a (neoliberal) right-wing alliance between López Murphy and Menem, against Kirchner, Carrió, and implicitly Rodríguez Saá; or an alliance of the low between Rodríguez Saá and Menem, against the non-Peronists. It is this latter alliance that became a reality, in May 2005, with the *Frente Popular*, even though Rodríguez Saá had clearly attacked Menem from the left in 2003. Menem and Saá even publicly accused Kirchner of not being Peronist, a charge that could not be taken lightly. Inversely, there existed the possibility of an alliance on the high between Carrió and López Murphy, which would have echoed the political experience of the *Alianza*, between “Chacho” Alvarez and De la Rúa from 1997 to 2000.

In late 2002, somewhere shortly before the first round, some polls put Menem and López Murphy in the lead. According to other polls, Carrió and Rodríguez Saá were in the lead (Cheresky 2004a: 46-47). Either way, this would have occasioned a purely *high-low* (and not left-right) second round, as in the 1999 presidential elections between Duhalde and De la Rúa. However, the 2003 finalists turned out to be Menem and Kirchner, in a second round that was in contrast entirely left-right, but *within* the Peronist movement. Carrió rallied to Kirchner, and Rodríguez Saá implicitly did the same despite a strong campaign of seduction undertaken by Menem, while López Murphy remained neutral (Figure 11).¹⁰⁸

The greater the euclidian spatial distance between two candidates or forces, the more unlikely the alliance. This was the case between the ARI (Alternative for a

Republic of Equals) and Menemism. One was also hard-pressed to imagine the Peronist left allying with López Murphy. On the high-right, there was then not enough room, despite their entirely different partisan origins, for López Murphy (Recrear), Domingo Cavallo with his *ex-Acción por la República*, and the defunct UCeDe.

For the legislative elections of October 2005, the major development was the rupture between Duhalde and his 2003 protégé, Kirchner.¹⁰⁹ Between 2003 and 2004, the latter had gradually consolidated power within Peronism and with the governors. Duhalde, on the other hand, had always sought to reign in Kirchner's "leftist" leanings. In 2005, Kirchner and Duhalde presented *two* separate and opposite tickets, and fought a bitter political battle vicariously through their wives, who were running against one another for senator in the important province of Buenos Aires. As expected, there was consequently neither a full rupture within Peronism nor a reconciliation, but rather a power relationship that reflected the electoral results of October.

Kirchner did not redefine Peronism, he simply represents one tendency of it,¹¹⁰ a tendency until recently clearly in control (under Kirchner) of the—somewhat “verticalist”—Peronist movement. In the same way this left-wing tendency was completely marginalized in the 1990s, rightwing Peronism was then also temporarily relatively marginalized. The traditional Peronism “of the center,” as represented by Duhalde or before by metallurgic union official Lorenzo Miguel, always stands in a difficult balancing position: it is regarded as necessary when one of these right or left tendencies is building up power, and then shunned as that tendency attempts to consolidate itself in power (but never achieves it). Peronism is a dynamic movement, and its vitality lies precisely in the tension between tendencies, which are always seeking to become *hegemonic* but are regularly set back by the reversal of a given ideological model, electoral fortune, economic limitations, and the difficulties of re-reelections.

Finally, on the anti-Peronist side, important lessons and similarities emerge from the striking comparison between the 1990s (Figure 10) and the 2000s. In 2003, the ARI, on the left and of Radical origin, occupied the same space that the FREPASO occupied in the 1990s. They also then appealed to a similar electorate. The FG first sought to create a “transversal” coalition on the left, but then shifted as we saw towards the *high left*, in

order to include it. Having lost its potential *low* Peronist voters, the FREPASO, on the high and in a period of rapid growth, gradually moved toward the high *center*, on a direct collision course with the UCR, which had always occupied this space. After the 1995 presidential election where they competed in part for the same voters, the FREPASO and the UCR came to the inevitable conclusion to form the *Alianza*. In the mid-2000s, ARI, under Carrió, also moved from left of center to the center (and some even argue the center-right), provoking in the process the desertion of several ARI leaders, and also increased its profile on the high, creating in 2007 the Coalición Cívica (Civic Coalition, or CC). The CC is difficult to pin down on the left-right axis, but stands very much on the high. With the rebirth of the Radical Civic Union (under Gerardo Morales), a Civic party,¹¹¹ which is as “civic” as the Civic Coalition, once again a spatial collision was inevitable. This has lead, once more, to the creation, this time not of an “Alianza” but of an Acuerdo Civico y Social (Social and Civic Agreement, or AcyS), in an almost fastidious repetition of history. In the meantime, and as always, the pendulum is again (in 2009) threatening to swing, once more, between the left and the right and center of the Peronist movement. Is there a certain “compulsion to repeat,” out of a spatial and cleavage dynamic?

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown how Argentina’s political dynamic and political space is structured as a two-dimensional political space, and most particularly as a double political spectrum. In the process, it has also shown how the Peronism/anti-Peronism political cleavage has a meaning that extends beyond, and indeed crosscuts, programmatic or policy differences. While governing in Argentina is something that indeed occur along the left-right axis, whether one looks at the 1990s or the late 2000s, electoral appeals and elections in Argentina function to a large extent around the iron law of the high-low dimension, a reflection of Argentina’s society, history, political culture, and recurring problems—what one would call a cleavage. Argentina is a particularly telling case in that it demonstrates that social differences can be translated and politicized along a much different axis than the classical left-right axis. And it also shows that contrary to what is often asserted, such

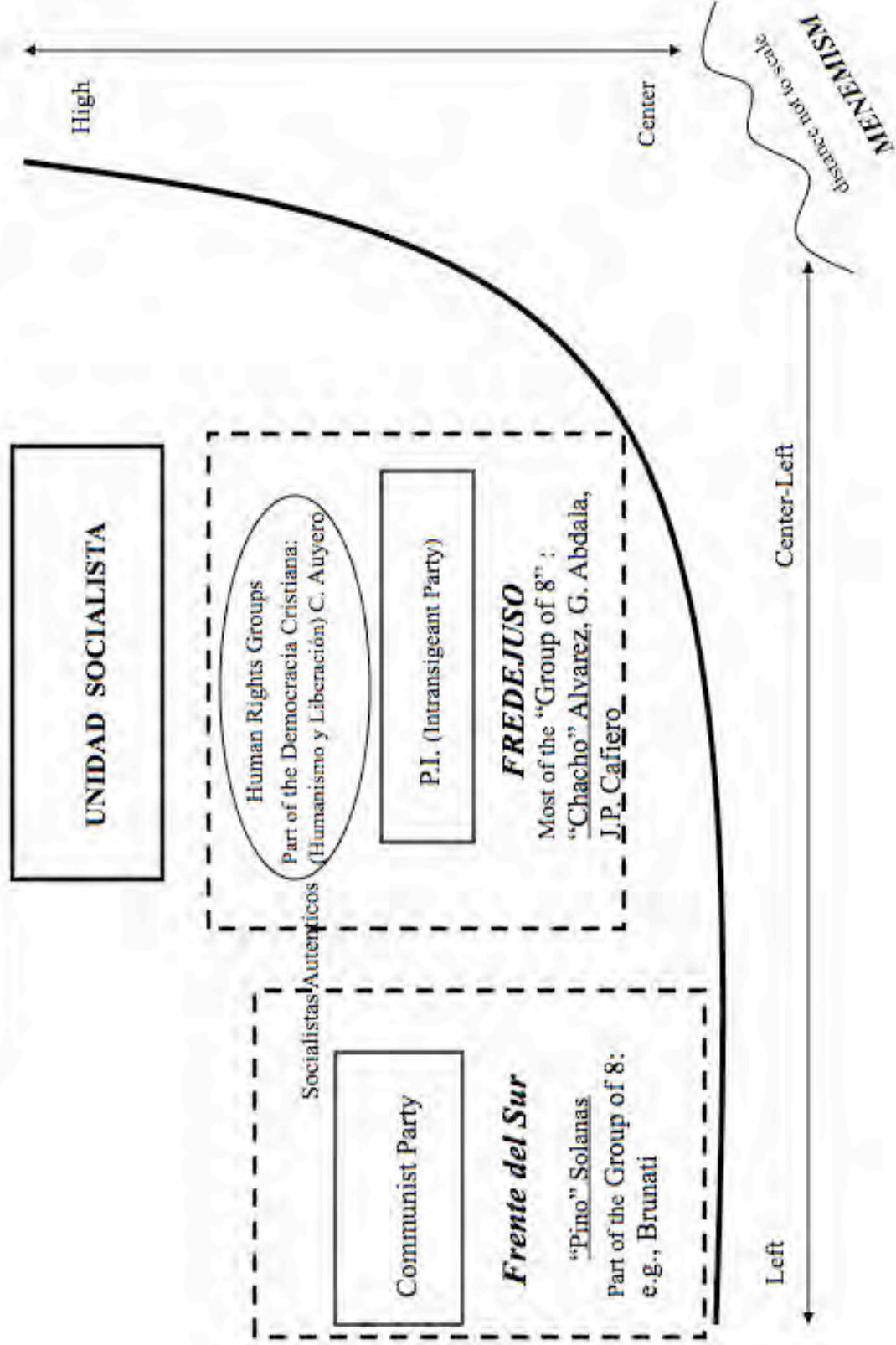
sociocultural and political-cultural differences remain quite relevant in politics—perhaps even more than when they are politicized along the left-right axis.

The paper also helps to explain Peronism itself. Peronism has long confounded political analysts because, while socially it is significantly class-based, it has stubbornly resisted political classification in left-right terms. Although it is by now clear that the movement contains both left and right wing elements, Peronism is still systematically different politically from the opposition it triggers. What has always distinguished Peronism from its opponents is the fact that it stands politically on the low, in terms of both dimensions of the high-low axis. It is for this reason that Peronism and anti-Peronism have repeatedly leapfrogged each other on the left-right axis, without this fundamentally altering the party system. In many ways, moreover, Peronism creates anti-Peronism—and historically, vice-versa as well.

A political repositioning toward the low on the part of the traditional non- or anti-Peronist forces in Argentina to the extent required to transform such a structured political space remains very improbable for the time being. Such a repositioning would, moreover, be quite antithetical to what they think they stand for politically, in terms of their principles. Similarly, a transformation of the double political spectrum would require that Peronism and its leaders position themselves markedly on the high, in the process risking alienating their traditional electorate and losing the bonds that have kept alive loyalty, triggered passion, and fostered hope (thus risking losing “Peronism’s soul”).¹¹² A disastrous economic performance can be lethal to the institutional life of a political actor, but even in such instances one is much less likely to witness a reordering of the political space in Argentina than, as has already happened many times, the eventual birth of new institutional actors that move into the void left by the fallen one, thus keeping alive and feeding upon certain traditions, principles, attachments or, perhaps most importantly, sensitivities.

Appendix

Institutional Unification of the High-Left Political Space, 1990-93



ENDNOTES

¹ See for example the first-rate empirical work of Canton, either alone (1973: 149–156; 1986) or with Jorrat (1978: 148–154; 1998: 149–156; 2007).

² I demonstrate this fact in my book manuscript through a logit regression based on survey data. Results display a remarkable significance level (α), under .0005.

³ While Di Tella emphasizes that “Peronist” parties are “populist workers’ parties” and not social democratic or labor parties, and more specifically that “Peronismo [is] a workers’ party...[that is] not social democratic” (1994: 262–63; see also, 1990: 149), in *all* of his writings from those of 1965 through those of the 1980s and then the 1990s, and even in 2003, Peronism is *always* characterized as *on the verge* of transforming itself into a labor or social-democratic party (1965: 72, 74; 1984: 265; 1998: 216, 217, 219–20). Peronism is also characterized as the local equivalent, in a less developed setting, of the Labor Party or as “occup[ying] a position akin to that of the Communists [in Italy]” (1990:155). In the 1960s, Di Tella forecasted the departure of the anti-status-quo elite minority from the populist movement and a greater reliance of the party on its trade union base. He described Peronism as, then, “developing a tendency to assume the shape of a labor movement...closer into line with European working-class tradition...This type gives way to a Labor version as found in fully industrialized societies” (1965: 72, 74). In the 1990s, under neoliberal Menem, Di Tella foresaw that “a division of Peronism might take place... and a left-wing coalition might [thus] have...a Peronist faction appealing to ‘national popular’ traditions...[and] modern trade unionists [supporting] the statement that Peronism is a forerunner of social democracy” (1998: 219–20). Untiringly, Di Tella repeated the same forecast in 2002 (“Una ruptura irreversible,” *Clarín*, 3 November 2002, p.16) and, again, in 2003 (presentation at the 39th Colloquium of the Instituto para el desarrollo empresarial de la Argentina, Buenos Aires, 6 November 2003).

The structural and, to a certain extent, intuitive view of Peronism as left-of-center relies on its electoral source of support and mobilization, which clearly lies among the popular sectors, and on its clear organizational links with the unions. A very influential perspective in the US sharing some political and intellectual affinity to that of Di Tella is that of Collier and Collier (1991), where a key feature of Peronism is the organizational links established between the populist party that incorporated labor and the unions. Their definition of populism also “draws heavily on the widely cited discussion of di Tella” (Collier and Collier 1991: 788).

⁴ While Jose Luis Romero was unequivocal about what he clearly considered a fascist regime in 1946, for Tulio Halperín, Perón undoubtedly attempted to establish a fascist regime but failed in

his enterprise. Closer to the events, back in 1956, Halperín wrote that Peronism was born “*de una tentativa fascista*” (of a fascist attempt) and that “fascism was the system of reference out of which Perón had formed his political ideology” before 1943, but that the founder of Peronism “elaborated what we could call...a fascism of the possible, finding the maximum dose of fascism that post-war Argentina was in a condition to withstand” (1995 [1956]: 53–54). The founder of the social sciences in Argentina, Gino Germani (e.g., 1978) also compared the mobilizational experience of Peronism not so much with social democracy, like the later Di Tella, but with the mobilizational experience of Mussolini’s fascism (which he had lived), while highlighting differences between the two.

⁵ The term “fascism” has unfortunately become synonymous in the last decades with right-wing, authoritarian, militaristic, and repressive regimes or movements. An accurate understanding of fascism, historically and conceptually, is not compatible with the demobilizational, atomizing, foreignizing, repressive, and often neoliberal political regimes of Pinochet, Videla, or the Uruguayan juntas, quite independently of the severe normative condemnation that both rightly deserve.

⁶ Seymour Martin Lipset also wrote, intriguingly but not without logic: “If Peronism is considered a variant of fascism, then it is a fascism of the left because it is based on the social strata who would otherwise turn to socialism or Communism as an outlet for their [claims] and frustrations” (1981: 176). Following this train of thought, he therefore considers Peronism a peculiar form of “left” extremism, or non-liberal left (127, 129).

⁷ For example the mass-distributed *Manual del Peronista* (The Peronist Manual) clearly states: “Our social doctrine is the social-christian doctrine” (Partido Peronista 1948: 70 and 27). Moreover, one of the well-known “Twenty Truths of Peronism,” or core statements of what Peronism is about, is that “justicialism is a new life philosophy: simple, practical, popular, profoundly Christian and humanist.” The popular educative magazine, *Mundo Peronista*, also emphasized the tight relationship between Christianity and the Peronist Doctrine (*Mundo Peronista* 24 [1952]).

In brief, all official documents circulated by Perón and his party among the Peronist base for mass indoctrination stressed the social-Christian or Christian nature of Peronism’s social doctrine. They also stressed that Peronism was a “third position” between the evils of liberal individualism and those of collectivism.

⁸ As recently as 1998, T. Di Tella wrote in a newspaper column: “The strange thing is that the Peronists think they are Christian-Democrats, and indeed they have joined this international. And

the Radicals think they are Social-Democrats, and they have also joined the respective world organization. But what people think has little to do with what they are.” (Translation by the author, *Clarín*, 18 October 1998).

⁹ Personal communication by T. Halperín, 1995. The influential commentator Mariano Grondona also used the same political characterization to describe Menem’s Peronism, which he compared to that of the conservative caudillos of the 1940s in the Province of Buenos Aires (*La Nación*, 28 September 1997). Subsequently, the popular magazine *Noticias* also adopted the term for Menem’s Peronism (e.g., 28 July 2001).

¹⁰ There are many instances of Perón’s praise of Che Guevara. In *Carta de Perón al movimiento peronista con motivo de la muerte del ‘Che’ Guevara* (Letter from Perón to the Peronist movement about Che Guevara’s death), for example, Perón writes: “His death tears my soul apart because he was one of ours, perhaps the best....I have read some wires that pretend to present him as an enemy of Peronism. Nothing more absurd.... [His death is] an irreparable loss for the cause of people who fight for their liberation. Peronism, as a national, popular, revolutionary movement pays an emotional homage to the idealist, the revolutionary, the Comandante Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, the Argentine guerilla fighter who died in action taking up arms in pursuit of the triumph of national revolutions in Latin America” (translation by the author, Baschetti 1988: 273–74).

¹¹ In Spanish: “*Este Chinito quien me roba las ideas.*” More formally, Perón expressed a deep political affinity with Mao’s project, in one of his most famous books, writing: “The bold attitude of the Great Mao has divided with clarity national socialism from the international socialism that gave rise to Soviet imperialism. ...For us, those of the third position, ...the refusal of Mao to side with colonialism...lays the foundation of the ‘Third World’ in which the different socialist democracies can get along perfectly...There is no reason for nationalism and socialism to quarrel. Both ...can unite with the common objective of liberating the *pueblos* [(the various people)]” (Perón, in *La Hora de los Pueblos* 1987 [1968]: 142–43).

¹² Many analysts of Argentine politics, such as Cheresky (2007) and Cheresky and Pousadela (2004) for example, have quite plausibly argued that the Argentine party system has imploded since 2001. Whether accurate or not (and certainly, many new parties and actors have emerged, while others have vanished or dramatically shrunk), the argument does not invalidate in any way our characterization about the spatial location and political affinities (and antagonism) of political forces or actors in Argentina. In fact, it remarkably strengthens it.

¹³ See for example Ostiguy (1990: 324–332, incl. f.n. 26).

¹⁴ One of the few key public figures who has remained consistent on that left-right axis is Domingo Cavallo, on the right, who has sequentially served in key economic positions under the military, the Peronists, and the Alianza led by a Radical president.

¹⁵ One should make clear that the low in politics is not limited to Peronism, although it is by far its main component. In the 1990s, for example, the MODIN of Aldo Rico was clearly on the low. It did oppose the economic model of Carlos Menem, but an alliance with the FREPASO would have been unthinkable. Not surprisingly, it eventually joined the Peronism of Duhalde, also on the low center.

¹⁶ On the concept and definition of cleavage, see the now classic work of Bartolini and Mair (1990).

¹⁷ The very first rough draft of this long paper was written in 2000.

¹⁸ This short section inevitably borrows from Ostiguy (2009). These two Kellogg working papers should normally be read together, as they form a series.

¹⁹ One could also say "well-mannered" or "well-bred," regarding demeanor, in the sense of "*bien educado*" in Spanish or "*bien élevé*" in French.

²⁰ It is important to emphasize that these are *claims*, repeatedly made in the political arena, rather than observations of actual behavior along those lines. They are, in other words, types of appeals and ways of presenting oneself to the public. Of course, to be credible it helps that there be a relation between those claims and actual practices, or that there be at least no overt contradiction.

²¹ Perceptions of immediacy have important implications with respect to establishing relations with "regular" people (*la gente*) or "the people" (*el pueblo*). Personalism can also be seen as warmer and easier to relate to.

²² Svampa (1994) offers a review of the vicissitudes of this topic through Argentine political and intellectual history. See also Shumway (1991) on the nineteenth century.

²³ See also De la Fuente (2000) for a historically well-researched book on that topic, especially page 78 and 86–89. In a previous work (Ostiguy 2007: 93–94), in the section "The 'Dreaded Alliance': The Montoneras," I describe the montoneras as hordes of Federal horsemen, made up of unkempt, rough, unruly, and generally lower-class gauchos with lances, fighting under the leadership of a caudillo in an uneven battle against the centralizing Unitarios.

²⁴ See Sarmiento's well-known book, *Facundo: Civilización y barbarie*, translated into English in the nineteenth century as *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants; or, Civilization and Barbarism* (1974 [1868]), chapters 1 and 2.

²⁵ Perón was preceded in that role, in the script of the oligarchic elite, by Hipólito Yrigoyen, the leader of the Radicales in the first third of the century. The animosity towards Yrigoyen and the explicit comparison with Rosas, however, was never as strong. Peron's rule, indeed, was the "second," and not the "third," tyranny. See Svampa (1994) and Ostiguy (1998).

²⁶ See Ostiguy (2007: 105), however, for the chain of equivalence that was created at the cultural-symbolic level.

²⁷ The purpose of the present paper is not to develop a methodology designed to measure positions on the high-low scale with quantitative precision. Such a task is both desirable and feasible, being equivalent in objectives to the methods developed for measuring programmatic positions on the left-right scale (e.g., Budge, Robertson, and Hearl 1987 or Heath, Evans, and Martin 1994). It is, however, appropriately the object of a separate article.

²⁸ During the first Perón government, Borges wrote a short story in slang, entitled "The Feast of the Monster" (1994 [1947]) which depicted an uncultured, lower-sector bus driver on his way to the Peronist founding event of October 17. Later, in "*L'illusion comique*," a well known piece published in the highbrow literary magazine *Sur* (1955), he described the Perón period as "years of opprobrium and foolery...made up of stupidity or gross ignorance and of fairy-tales for the consumption of boors and bumpkins."

²⁹ The point here is not that Peronist leaders are just like the Federal caudillos of the nineteenth century. Rather, Peronist leaders and their followers often *refer to* caudillismo as a form of *legitimation* and as a model (with clear roots in Argentina) for a particular type of political practice and representation.

³⁰ A well-known case of *patoterismo* in the 1990s was that of "Batata" ("Sweet Potato"—a nickname he picked up while working at the central market carrying cases of yams), who was involved in beating up a journalist for researching "what he was not supposed to research."

³¹ Quoted in Cerruti (1993:155).

³² The Carapintadas, or literally "Painted Faces," were a radical right-wing nationalist military group within the Argentine Armed Forces during the 1980s, mainly known for staging three military uprisings against the democratically elected Alfonsín Radical government, particularly in opposition to the human rights trials then going on. They claimed to want to preserve the dignity of the Armed Forces. Their ideology was nationalist and on the Catholic far-right. Particularly "virile," they claimed to be into combat and heroism. The best book on the topic is arguably Norden (1996).

³³ It is important to highlight that in Argentina, the pejorative term “*los negros*” does not refer to people of African origins, with black skin, but to poorer and generally less educated people with somewhat darker skin and black hair, usually partly mestizo. It is not clear, furthermore, if the category is a racial one (i.e., someone not entirely white) or, as I would perhaps be more inclined to think, a social one. Both elements are present.

³⁴ In the mid 1990s, the MODIN was absorbed, however (and not too surprisingly) by the Peronism of Duhalde. On the Iron Guard and the Commando of Organization, see endnote 46 below.

³⁵ On the “inordinate fear of communism” on the part of a certain—nationalist—fraction of the elite in Argentina at the time, see Waisman (1987: chapters 6 and 7).

³⁶ On that topic, from a perspective highly sympathetic to popular culture, see the excellent work of James (1988, 1995).

³⁷ Perón’s internal opponents within the military, responding to the pressure from the growing opposition movement, sought an immediate return to civilian, liberal democratic rule, without any military continuity.

³⁸ Speech by Perón on the night of 17 October 1945, reproduced in Britos (1984: 192–194) and in many other sources.

³⁹ The two subdimensions of left and right, analyzed in details in Ostiguy (2009: 11–16), here become extremely relevant. In terms of economics and distribution, Perón could absolutely not, as the ordinary working class well understood, be considered on the right. He thus shared a position with the leftist political parties, in the opposite camp. The other dimension of left and right, about authority-and-order in public decision-making, remained present, but had somewhat faded in the two years from 1943 to 1945.

⁴⁰ See, for example, the national newspaper *La Razón*, 7 November 1945, p. 8.

⁴¹ Doctor G. Topolevsky and Frugoni Zabala, national delegates for the UCR, quoted in *La Razón*, 5 November 1945.

⁴² The many cartoons published during that precise period in *La Hora* and in *La Vanguardia* are particularly vivid and extreme in that regard.

⁴³ In his first electoral rally, Perón declared: “we will *not* call anybody rabble or shirtless...We will have a good solid heart under a shirt, which is better than having a bad heart under a coat.” Nonetheless, during the applause after Perón’s speech, someone handed him a flagpole with a shirt tied to it as a flag. Perón was then photographed waving it, an image circulated nationally by

the opposition press. From then on, the shirt(less) would be a Peronist symbol. (Speech reproduced in Luna (1969: 432).)

⁴⁴ The theoretical relation between the two parts of Figure 2 could, a priori, logically be understood in an “uncommitted,” tri-dimensional way: the bottom part of Figure 2 would thus be pictured as a third dimension, of depth, in relation to the (already two-dimensional) top part of Figure 2. Thus, here, all combinations between the two parts of the figure would be logically possible a priori. However, in a much more ambitious way and as done in this section, we believe (as elaborated and justified elsewhere) that the two parts of Figure 2 can be superimposed in a graphically simple (and “flat”) two-dimensional way, creating a figure the shape of a wheel. We are thus making here an empirical and specifically theoretical statement about the ordering of the divides in relation to one another. In this way, the poles of *all subdimensions* are thus *not* entirely *neutral* with regard to each other—even though high-low and left-right, as a whole, are.

⁴⁵ The military coup that overthrew the Perón government and thus marked the end of the ten-year old Peronist regime called itself the “*Libertadora*,” or “liberating revolution.” The name is a very partial denomination that nonetheless reflected the spirit and interpretation of the anti-Peronist side of the divide, for whom Peronism had been a period of marked authoritarian rule, associated by some to fascism. The name has stayed with us to the present.

⁴⁶ I qualify these governments as semi-democratic because of the official electoral ban on Peronism.

⁴⁷ In the paintings of Carpani, for example, workers with massive bodies and unkempt gauchos charging on horses with lances gave an emancipatory bodily character to “barbarism.”

⁴⁸ The ERP even renamed a sugar plantation they occupied in the interior “Ho Chi Minh.”

⁴⁹ *Gorila* is a Peronist term used to describe virulent anti-Peronists. Coined in the aftermath of the 1955 coup against Perón, the term has come to refer to anyone who feels aversion, or at least dislike, for the masses and especially the lower sectors.

⁵⁰ “La juventud peronista sale a la calle y pelea y si se encuentra un gorila si no lo caga lo mea.” Personal collection of Peronist *cantos*, most of which (including this one) were taken from the Peronist historical archive of archivist Roberto Baschetti, at the Biblioteca Nacional.

⁵¹ For example, as McGuire (1997: 98) writes, Augusto Vandor “organized gangs of street toughs who stifled dissent in exchange for a meal, a few drinks, and a night of camaraderie.”

⁵² While the location of Brito Lima’s Comando de Organización far on the Peronist right is unproblematic and part of a consensus, many militants of the Guardia de Hierro (Iron Guard) would clearly take issue to be located on the right. They viewed themselves as a militarized, ultra-

orthodox Peronist organization, against any type of challenges within Peronism to the authority of the leader, Perón. In the 1970s, such challenges within Peronism came from the Peronist left, thus the strong left-“right” antagonism between the Montoneros and Guardia de Hierro. In the 1960s, however, Guardia de Hierro, opposed Vandor and supported Rucci for the same reason, that is, the undisputed leadership of the leader, and here the issue was not a left-right one. I somewhat controversially locate Guardia de Hierro on the Peronist right in that its motivation is absolute allegiance to the national *leader* and not working-class union claims or “liberation or dependency” or “the pueblo peronista.” (See, for example, Pozzi and Cerviño, n.d.) Labels here are confusing: while the Rumanian Iron Guard was clearly proto-fascist, it is actually the Comando de Organizacion (and not the Argentine Iron Guard) that is very strongly and explicitly anti-Semitic. The Comando de Orgazación was also close to Lopez Rega and the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance.

⁵³ *Quebracho* is a native species of hardwood that grows in the northern hinterland of Argentina.

⁵⁴ The orthodox then won the confrontation, forcing the ousting of López Rega. The orthodox, on the very-low center-right, then confronted Italo Luder, *also* on the center but *much more on the high* within Peronism, in the last months before the coup, with the former opposing any form of party institutionalization (McGuire 1997:168–69). McGuire makes it clear that “the cleavage between verticalists [Miguel, “the parrot”] and antiverticalists [Luder; Victorio Calabro] did not correspond directly to a rivalry between unionists and politicians” (ibid).

⁵⁵ This situation stands in sharp contrast to that of Brazil, for example. This shows how deeply rooted in society and history are the political divisions of Argentina. *Party institutionalization*, of course, is a different matter. The observation made here is about the durability of the given structure of a political space, as well as, secondarily, the continuity over time of major political parties, movements, or set of parties (such as the socialist parties in Argentina). On the concept of party institutionalization in Latin America, see Levitsky (1998a, 2001a, 2003).

⁵⁶ This style was so pronounced that Alfonsín gave him the nickname of *el llorón*, or “cry baby.”

⁵⁷ The UCR had often been characterized as a party of “committees,” with a set of notables, rather than a mobilizing and bureaucratized mass party. The Coordinadora aimed to transform the UCR into a mass-mobilizing party.

⁵⁸ In that sense, in order to perform well in the political arena, Alfonsín decided to make the UCR *more similar*, in these respects, to Peronism. This strategy paid off politically during most of the 1980s, although it can be criticized from a normative standpoint.

⁵⁹ Adelina de Viola, in contrast to other UCeDe leaders, maintained a lower-middle-class cultural demeanor. Significantly, de Viola defected to the PJ in 1994.

⁶⁰ See also on that topic Norden (1996: 136–39; 213). Apparently, the *Carapintadas* also had ties to low-right Peronists such as some ex-Iron Guard members. Aldo Rico, after forming his own, independent political party, eventually joined with Peronism in the mid-1990s.

⁶¹ In the Province of Buenos Aires in 1985, the UCR won 41.5% of the vote, the Frente Renovador 27%, and the FREJULI, 9.7% (Ministerio del Interior).

⁶² Menem's behavior is thus much more in line with the directional theory of voting than with the proximity model. On that topic, see the numerous articles of George Rabinowitz.

⁶³ I wish to express my thanks to Steve Levitsky for the numerous feedback and intellectual exchanges that gave birth to this section, as well as for the more general editing work from which sections of this paper benefited.

⁶⁴ In-depth interviews carried out among low-income residents of Greater Buenos Aires found that the primary reason given for supporting the Menem government was not its economic policies, but the fact that it was Peronist (Ostiguy 1998: chapter 6).

⁶⁵ For Teichman, a policy network in Latin America is an economic-policy, technocratic clique, tightly integrated and bound by personal relations, that is located inside the coalition in power but that is often at odds with the interests of the coalition partners. Such policy networks have ramifications downward within the state and civil society and upward within international lending agencies (2001:16–22). At a more general level, Weyland (1996) made the argument that populism in the post-mass-party organization phase is highly compatible with neoliberalism. Roberts, a year earlier (1995), made a similar argument, although focusing more on targeted clientelism (which he still sees as being against a pure free market logic).

⁶⁶ This latter case assumes that a whole group of voters, defined sociologically, respond to only one type of appeals. As I argue in this paper, however, voters politically on the high-right (especially within the upper-middle class) and on the low-left (particularly within the popular sectors) had to “decide,” or respond, between conflicting sets of appeals.

⁶⁷ In Argentina, vast sectors of the population have been at different times between 1955 and 1983 without access to any machine politics, and not under the umbrella of a union, but Peronism remained very much alive as a political identity.

⁶⁸ EPH (Encuesta Permanente de Hogares), of the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo, Ministerio de Economía, República Argentina, or National Institute of Statistics and Census, Ministry of the Economy, Republic of Argentina.

⁶⁹In my interviews, 55% of the lower-sector *Peronist* sympathizers rejected the new economic orientation; 25% said it was necessary, but did not like it; and 20% agreed with it (1998: 466).

In November 1989, Domingo Cavallo was evaluated as “good” by 63% of the high socioeconomic level, but by only 30% in the low socioeconomic level (Equas 23). In March 1990, at a difficult moment, the percentage of respondents giving a “good/very good” evaluation of the economic policy was more than twice as high in the high socioeconomic level as it was in the low; inversely, 72% of the low socioeconomic level evaluated the economic policy as bad, compared to 50% in the high socioeconomic level (Equas 26). In August 1991, the economic plan was far more popular among the high socioeconomic level than Menem was, while the reverse held true in the low socioeconomic level. The high socioeconomic level then gave a 75% rate of approval to the economic plan, but only a 44% approval rating to Menem (Equas 43). The approval rating for the economic plan was 24 points lower among the low socioeconomic level.

The social differences in attitudes toward privatization are consistent with this picture. The middle and the high socioeconomic levels gave an approval rating of 70% and 68%, respectively, to privatization; only 26% and 29%, respectively, disagreed with them. Among the lower socioeconomic level, opinions were about equally divided (Equas 26). (See next note for description of Equas.)

⁷⁰ All surveys are from the survey firm Equas, which the survey firm Sofres-Ibope in Argentina inherited. Each survey was numbered and archived under such a number by Equas. The very numerous cross-tabulations sheets derived from each those surveys and printed for the customers who ordered the survey are available from the author.

⁷¹ See preceding note.

⁷² See note above, as well as Ostiguy (1998) on voting patterns. My substantive conclusions on political behavior are thus very different, to say the least, from those reached by Stokes (2001). The issue can only be resolved by comparing empirical survey data that is *socially differentiated*. My conclusions, based on the wide collection of Sofres-Ibope surveys in my possession, are also very much in line with my own field experience on the ground and with my interviews in the lower-sector areas of the Greater Buenos Aires, a stronghold of Peronism.

⁷³ Canton and Jorrat, leading experts in quantitative political sociology of voting behavior, have also highlighted in their work the key, determining importance of partisan identity in Peronist voting behavior, including during the 1990s (Canton and Jorrat 2002: 420, 424). In Ostiguy (1998), I empirically studied the phenomenon both qualitatively (through interviews) and quantitatively.

⁷⁴ A notable exception is Dominguez and McCann (1995) on attitudes on policy issues in Mexico (where political identities are moreover weaker, emotionally, than in Argentina).

⁷⁵ Our own research (Ostiguy 1998) and that of Canton and Jorrat (2002) strongly support that claim.

⁷⁶ A good parallel, admittedly much more emotionally charged than that of political identity in Argentina but sharing a similar dynamic logic, is that of soccer club membership and identity, for which people even kill or get killed in that country. The logic of identity has an important social and individual function.

⁷⁷ Peronism, after all, is largely about the success of “one of ours” to the shiny and glamorous attributes of power, without renouncing the link with the *pueblo*. Evita also conspicuously displayed jewelry and furs, without renouncing, on the contrary, the affective link with the *descamisados*. A similar phenomenon also occurs with pop singers or professional sport idols, whether in boxing (Gatica) or soccer (Maradona).

⁷⁸ For example, when announcing in a Greater Buenos Aires shantytown that he was going to make English compulsory in primary schools, Menem added, in a marked crescendo: “...and this way, we will be able to tell the Brits, *in their own language*, that *the Malvinas are Argentine!*”

⁷⁹ See also Nun (1995) for a similar analysis, contemporary to the initial drafts of this research.

⁸⁰ MODIN peaked at 9 percent of the national vote (13 percent in the province of Buenos Aires) in 1994. This electoral support was concentrated among the poor, and MODIN consistently performed best in Peronist strongholds such as the second belt of Greater Buenos Aires.

⁸¹ Though of minor electoral significance, the support of the wealthy sectors was critical to Menem’s ability to attract international investment and remain securely in power.

⁸² Canton and Jorrat (2002: 422) find a similar, but more pronounced pattern. As they state: “[For the first time, class did] not emerge as a crucial factor *vis-à-vis* political identification in 1995...One possible explanation is that the middle and upper-middle classes adhered to the new economic policies heralded by the Peronist candidate, combining the traditional working-class constituency of Peronist electorate with the higher strata. This ultimately might have produced the statistical insignificance of the class variable.” However, in 1999, the “upper-middle class sectors who had voted for Peronism in 1995 moved either to the Alianza or to a third party, headed by former Minister of Economics, Domingo Cavallo” (ibid: 423).

⁸³ Within the most endowed sectors of society, there is a striking difference in political preferences between those with the highest *educational* level, who tended to be on the high (and

often on the high-left in fact) and to clearly oppose Menemism, and those with the highest *economic* level, who tended to be on the high-right and often favored Menemism.

⁸⁴ While the reaction within the Peronist popular sectors to the new neoliberal orientation aroused a lot of academic interest, the even higher level of concern, irritation, and unhappiness within those same Peronist popular sectors for the new unconditional alignment of the PJ government on the United States (characterized by the PJ leadership in a characteristically low fashion as a *relación carnal* (carnal relationship) has gone largely unnoticed and unstudied.

⁸⁵ Many people on the high-right *opposed* Menem, such as Mario Grondona for example, certainly not from the left, but as *high*. That is, their belief in the high trumped their economically right-wing convictions. For Bernardo Neustadt, it was just the reverse.

⁸⁶ Cavallo has an image that is less conspicuously high than that of the Alsogaray family, which one associates more readily with the wealthy neighborhood of Barrio Norte. Evolving with his time, Cavallo has attempted to present a more modernist, technological, pro-enterprise, US-like image, although he remains popular generally in the same social sectors as the previous UCeDe.

Cavallo, as always more right than high, also formed a temporary alliance with the sector most to the right *and* to the high of Peronism in Capital, led by Gustavo Beliz.

⁸⁷ For an analysis of the constitutional reform, see Cheresky (1999: 273–311).

⁸⁸ Novaro and Palermo (1998: 132) present a similar, although not identical, argument.

⁸⁹ Álvarez had the support of the political organizations constituting most of the FREPASO, including the FG, the newly incorporated US, as well as the unions sympathetic to the FREPASO. Novaro and Palermo make the same point (1998:144).

⁹⁰ *Página/12*, 3 April 1994, pp. 3–4.

⁹¹ The economically right-wing turn of Menem, together with his new social alliances, certainly created severe tensions for Ubal dini. Ubal dini even ran on a separate Peronist ballot in 1991, but received few votes. In contrast to much higher unions such as the Asociación Trabajadores del Estado (State Workers' Association, or ATE) (white-collar state employees) and the Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina (Confederation of Education Workers of Argentina, or CTERA) (teachers), Ubal dini could not break with Peronism, the “movement of the Argentine *pueblo*.” As with other left Peronists, he would have to oppose (without success) from *within*.

⁹² What used to be called the “Capital Federal” and is now called the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires is the equivalent of the DF in Mexico or of DC in the US. It is a “state” that is not a state, the core of a city that is almost a state, or to be more precise a city which has been “federalized,”

as the nation's capital. Up to 1996, the executive power of Federal Capital was a civil servant *appointed* by the president (and ratified by the Senate), with the name (itself originating in the colonial period) of intendant. Since the executive head is now *elected*, he or she is called chief of government.

⁹³ It is not possible to repeatedly cross the main cleavage of Argentine politics with impunity. After leaving the FREPASO, Bordón tried to come back to the PJ; his political career, however, was by then over.

⁹⁴ Declaration made on 31 March 1998, quoted in *Microsemanario* 312.

⁹⁵ "*Porteno*" refers to residents of the Federal Capital, which is a port city.

⁹⁶ As governor, Duhalde visited poor neighborhoods on an almost daily basis, eating *choripanes* (local chorizo "hotdogs"), sharing maté, and playing cards with people. He also insisted on being called "*negro*." (Interview with Alberto Perez, a former PJ leader in Buenos Aires, by Steven Levitsky, October 1996).

⁹⁷ This last section borrows heavily from Ostiguy (2005), in French, translated into English in the March 2006 LASA paper "Peronist and non-Peronist Lefts: The Argentine Party System in the Kirchner Era."

⁹⁸ Ramón Puerta (21–23 December 2001), Adolfo Rodríguez Saá (23 December–1 January 2002), and Eduardo Camaño (1–2 January 2002). All told, Argentina saw five presidents in two weeks, if Fernando De la Rúa and Eduardo Duhalde are included.

⁹⁹ The *punteros* are the agents of political clientelism who distribute goods of primary necessity in exchange for political and social support; they work in the underprivileged communities and are associated with Peronism. According to S. Levitsky, "[the *punteros*] use personal ties, persuasion, and material favors to construct a clientele, which permits them to act as the guardians of their area's votes. They then take these votes to the negotiating table with the local politicians, who offer them jobs and other state resources in return for their support" (Levitsky 2003:67; see also Auyero 2000). On a political analysis of clientelism in Argentina, see the masterful articles of Calvo and Murillo (2004, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Regarding the fortuitousness of Kirchner coming to power, Cheresky (2004b: 27–36) makes a similar argument, well documented with survey data and contextual historical analysis.

¹⁰¹ Cheresky certainly strongly makes this point. While he has repeatedly stated it, the most explicit formulation is in Cheresky (2006a: 13–23), in the edited volume tellingly titled *La política después de los partidos* (*Politics after Political Parties*).

On party system fragmentation and party system polarization see, for example, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñan (2005: 24–25).

¹⁰² Since Carlos Menem was at that time president of the National Council (i.e., the executive) of the Justicialist Party (PJ), and held at his disposal a real possibility to manipulate the electoral register of the PJ to his own advantage in a primary, President Duhalde, who enjoyed majority support in Peronist circles, convened a national congress of the Justicialist Party and obtained from the delegates a majority vote to cancel the primary and permit the three principal preliminary candidates for president to participate directly and separately in the general election. With Peronism's dominance at the national level assured by a long shot, the PJ's primaries became in a sense open and national. The goal of the original maneuver was to avoid Menem becoming the official Peronist candidate, which would have guaranteed him the presidency.

¹⁰³ For a comparative perspective on party systems in Latin America, see the major edited volume by Mainwaring and Scully (1995).

¹⁰⁴ The radical president De la Rúa was at the immediate source of the 2001 crisis, which majorly affected the popularity of his party. Nevertheless, *both non-Peronist* presidential candidates were of a Radical origin, since Elisea Carrió, the leader of ARI (*Argentinos por una República de Iguales*), was a longtime Radical deputy before founding ARI, and Ricardo López Murphy was a militant with the Radical Youth as well as a cabinet member and finance minister under the Radical presidency of De la Rúa.

¹⁰⁵ This thesis, running counter to the institutionalism prevalent in American political science today, is very close to René Rémond's classic work on the rights in France, where political "currents" or "tendencies" are much more stable than parties. These currents can certainly be situated spatially, as Rémond does with them on the left-right spectrum. The specific character of the Argentine party system lies not so much in the "precedence" (or "anteriority") of the current or spatial position over party organization, as in its two-dimensionality.

¹⁰⁶ *Gorila* (gorilla) is the pejorative expression used by Peronists to designate those who hold fierce anti-Peronist sentiments and are perceived as scornful of the "unclean," "ignorant," and "noisy" classes.

¹⁰⁷ The presidential elections of April 2003 were the first following the "get rid of them all!": the politicians overtly sought to demonstrate "that they were not all alike."

¹⁰⁸ During the campaign, Carrió and Rodríguez Saá lost the most ground (partly to Kirchner), whereas López Murphy gained the most. The final results of the first round of presidential

elections on April 27, 2003 were: Menem, 24.5%; Kirchner, 22.2%; López Murphy, 16.4%; Rodríguez Saá, 14.1%; Carrió, 14.1%

¹⁰⁹ For an excellent analysis of the 2005 legislative elections, see Cheresky (2006b: 53–63). For that time period, see also Levitsky and Murillo (2008).

¹¹⁰ Each tendency has its own *interpretation* of Peronism, which it considers most legitimate. Though ideologically *very* far from one another, these tendencies—like most things in Peronism—are informal. Their fortune depends on the power acquired by certain leaders when they delimit their own ideological projects.

Seen from another angle, the tendencies are *not* ideological projects (on the left-right axis) capable of existing independently of the party in question, but rather diverse interpretations of what constitutes “real” Peronism. Paradoxically, this situation leads to a reduced tolerance for the inevitable, stubborn “interpretive adversaries,” who are not perceived as a legitimate minority but instead as “mistaken.” A better parallel would seem to be that of divergent Christian interpretations (“tendencies”) in relation to a mortal pope.

¹¹¹ Not surprisingly, considering our very definition of the “high,” such a family of parties have chosen as the key, characterizing epithet for their political formation the label of “civic.” This pole of the divide is quite in line with how this political divide should be comparatively understood—even if such dichotomy or polarity is rarely used, if it all, in the political science literature on the topic. Obviously, such self-characterization is normatively highly positive, so the literature then needs to use an equally positive label for the other pole, in order to be acceptable. For that reason, we prefer “high” and “low”, as defined and described above.

¹¹² Argentines refer to this “feeling,” to this “soul of Peronism,” as the *mística peronista*, or Peronist mystic.

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