

Between the Local and the Transnational: New Historiographical Approaches on Argentine Political History, 1930 to 1943

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In the last two decades, new scholarship has revised one of the most contentious periods of twentieth-century Argentine history: the long decade of 1930-1943. These years have traditionally been the focus of strong political, ideological, and historiographical debates due, in great part, to their critical location as a hinge between two other important periods. On the one hand, they represent the decline and crisis of the liberal republic, established in 1853, marked by the impact of the Great Depression in Argentina's export economy as well as by the first period of military rule in modern Argentine history, which began in September 1930. On the other hand, the transformations experienced during those years have also been studied as the prelude to the rise of Juan Perón and his populist movement, which began in full force with his participation in the military coup of June 1943 and the ensuing military regime of 1943-1946.

This renewed scholarly interest in the 1930-1943 period can be explained by several factors. In a way, it is part of the new wave of historical studies that followed the return to civilian rule in 1983, as the democratization process fueled interest regarding the nation's past and provided a more welcoming social and academic environment for historical research. Moreover, the professionalization of the discipline, the application of new methodologies, and interest in new areas of research were helped, first, by the return to Argentina of scholars who had been forced into exile during the military dictatorship of 1976-1983, and, second, by the increasing transnational networks built by students and scholars through academic programs, conferences, and publications.

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At the same time, the interest of historians in these years has been mirrored by a revival of debates that flourished in the 1930s and early 1940s, a revival explained by the current political cycle of *kirchnerismo*, inaugurated in 2003. For example, in 2011 the national government created the Instituto Nacional de Revisionismo Histórico e Iberoamericano Manuel Dorrego, whose very name and guiding ideas can be traced back to the original historiographical movement of historical revisionism of the 1930s.² Revisionism gave birth to a particular vision of Argentine history based on a series of interpretations, images, and perceptions about the 1930s and early 1940s. As Michael Goebel has recently reminded us, revisionism's relatively limited academic impact has been counterbalanced by its phenomenal political impact.³ It can be traced in leftist and rightist nationalist groups as well as in Peronism, and in the deep presence of revisionist images in widespread popular beliefs in black-and-white interpretations of a frustrated Argentine past. The reappearance of revisionism in the current political cycle thus not only highlighted the strong presence of historical debates in Argentine politics, but also sparked interest in the period from historians and general public alike.

This article will provide an overview of some of the scholarship that since the late 1990s and early 2000s has been revising the political and ideological history of the 1930-1943 period. It will first outline the problems posed by traditional approaches to those years, which emphasized clear-cut lines and partisan perspectives that stressed either nefarious or heroic actors. It will show how these new studies have begun to offer more nuanced interpretations of the political context and main parties in this period. A second section will then focus on how some of the new studies on Argentine politics and ideology have highlighted transnational linkages and connections, while others pay attention to the local, social dimensions underlying political processes.

From “the infamous decade” to the new scholarship

Until the 1990s, most studies on the 1930s and early 1940s told a narrative of decadence and corruption. On the surface, it is easy to understand this perception.⁴ The first military coup in Argentine history in September 1930 led, first, to a military government presided over by General José F. Uriburu in 1930 that was replaced in 1932 by a limited democratic system that lasted until 1943. In this system, a conservative coalition of parties, known as the *Concordancia*, stayed in power through the increasing use of electoral fraud and reliance on the unstable support of the army and the Catholic Church. Conflicts between the ruling coalition and the main opposition parties—Radicals, Socialists, and

Progressive Democrats—deepened over the decade and resulted in stalemate. Eventually, this situation resulted in the overall crisis of the political system that ended with another military coup in June 1943. These developments, added to their location between the old liberal republic and the rise of Peronism, characterized these years as a decadent, transitional period.

In large part, the bleak view of the 1930s and early 1940s was consolidated by nationalist writers and historians, from both left and right, many of them involved in the historiographical movement of historical revisionism, born in the 1930s, or in the Peronist movement later. In their polemic writings, many authors such as Julio and Rodolfo Irazusta, Raúl Scalabrini Ortiz, José María Rosa, and Arturo Jauretche rose beyond their personal, political, and ideological differences to consolidate a line of criticism against ruling conservative groups whom they saw as fraudulent and corrupt and a political system that they believed was based on bankrupt economic and political liberal models.⁵ They also denounced economic policies adopted during those years, such as the creation of the Central Bank, as beneficial to upper-class conservative sectors and contrary to the interests of the popular masses and the country. These nationalist authors coined and popularized the term “the infamous decade” that, despite its null historiographical value, has become the most popular reference, even in scholarship, to the long decade of the 1930s.

Beyond these polemic and partisan approaches, other traditional works shared a negative view on these years. For example, authors linked to the Radical party such as Félix Luna and Gabriel del Mazo wrote after Perón’s rise to power, criticizing the leadership and strategy of the Radical Party of the 1930s and early 1940s as inefficient, contrary to Radical traditions of popular democracy, and complicit with a corrupt system—an interpretation that explained the Party’s failure against Perón.⁶ The perspective of a transitional and decadent period also informs José Luis Romero’s seminal work on the history of ideas in Argentina, written in the 1950s and influenced by his position as a Socialist intellectual engaged with anti-fascist and anti-Peronist groups in the 1940s and 1950s.⁷ To name just one more example, the dominant theme of Alberto Ciria’s classical and influential book on the period is the progressive crisis and corruption of the political system founded upon the liberal Constitution of 1853.⁸

While this negative outlook prevailed, other scholarship on the period eventually adopted more sophisticated approaches. As a result, a long list of valuable studies focus on different groups in the 1930s and early 1940s such as the military,⁹ the labor movement,¹⁰ nationalist groups and ideologies,¹¹ and the Catholic Church.¹² Still, much of this scholarship, when dealing with the period, is influenced by a narrative of decadence and is overwhelmingly focused on those groups in relation to the emergence of Peronism. This has the drawback of denying specific

historical weight to the history of those years and framing them narrowly within the boundaries of the crisis of the liberal order and Peronism.

Since the 1990s, other studies have deepened and expanded the analysis of the 1930-1943 period. They accept some of the major arguments regarding the crisis of the political system and the importance of this period for the future history of the country. However, they provide a more nuanced analysis and understanding of actors and trends that defy easy categorization with their intra-party conflicts alongside and across party lines. To this end, they pay considerable attention to the dynamics of the political system and the structure, actions, and ideological composition of the main political parties during those years.

The simplistic idea that the eleven-year period that followed the military regime of 1930-1932 was an exceptional period characterized by electoral fraud, an idea which had already been questioned by some more careful analyses,¹³ has been dismissed conclusively. For example, Luciano de Privitellio analyzes the political process in general and elections in particular within the broader historical framework of 1900-1955.¹⁴ By focusing on this larger period, de Privitellio provides a better understanding of the location of the 1930s and early 1940s regarding continuities and changes in terms of electoral laws and fraud. He confirms that practices of electoral fraud, a central part of the Argentine political system before 1930, were more limited between 1931 and 1935, when the Radical party lifted its electoral abstention and the national government and its allied political sectors were forced to resort to more blatant electoral fraud in order to remain in power.

This conclusion receives further confirmation from Maria Dolores Béjar's study of conservative political sectors in the province of Buenos Aires.¹⁵ She clearly shows that electoral fraud was not only carried out by the ruling *Concordancia* sectors between 1932 and 1938 against opposition parties, but also during the years between the 1931 presidential election and the radical return to the ballots in 1935, when fraud was mainly used by and against the different political forces that comprised the *Concordancia* in order to settle internal differences. From the perspective of the history of the ideas of the period between 1930 and 1945, Tulio Halperín Donghi has provided a penetrating analysis and a wealth of documents that add further proof of the country's slow, though not pre-determined slippage over the 1930s into what he labels "the impossible republic," increasingly paralyzed by the unresolved conflict between the ruling *Concordancia* and the political forces of the opposition.¹⁶

These approaches do not deny the crisis of the political system; they qualify it within larger historical processes and narratives. Detailed analyses of the main political forces of the period provide additional evidence of a complex and dynamic picture. This is the case of Béjar's above-mentioned study on the

conservative forces of Buenos Aires and, by extension, of the ruling political sectors in 1930-1943. She shows that the fragmentation and divisions that plagued the conservative forces in Buenos Aires before 1930 continued in the 1930s and resulted in numerous conflicts. In fact, they were exacerbated by the ideological, political, and personal diversity of the groups that formed the *Concordancia* and by the changing local and international contexts.¹⁷

New studies have also revised the history and make-up of the Radical party throughout the 1930s, disputing the traditional view that emphasized clear ideological boundaries between an elitist party leadership, linked to former president Marcelo T. de Alvear, and popular groups related to *yrigoyenismo*. Alejandro Cattaruzza had already uncovered in 1994 those blurred ideological boundaries as expressed by articles published in the Radical magazine *Hechos e Ideas* from 1935 to 1941. Expanding this analysis, and like Béjar for the conservative forces, Ana Virginia Persello locates the history of the party in 1930-1943 within a broader historical framework and shows continuity and change before and after 1930. Unlike more traditional scholarship, Persello's works demonstrate that different groups within the Radical party shared some common ground and that conflicts were more likely about party control than about party ideology. For example, Persello shows that different Radical factions shared liberal arguments rooted in the party's history to protest anti-liberal trends and political exclusion, and that they generally agreed to lift electoral abstention in 1935.¹⁸

The new perspectives on the Conservative and Radical parties in the 1930s can be connected to studies on both parties for earlier historical periods. For example, Paula Alonso offers a thorough analysis of the *Partido Autonomista Nacional* in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, showing the dynamics and tensions between the national government and the provinces in the construction of a fragmented yet hegemonic power. For the period of the Radical administrations of 1916-1930, Marcela Ferrari has explored changes and continuities regarding the political establishment, with a careful consideration of social, familial, and professional networks. From another perspective, Joel Horowitz analyzes how, in a fragmented political situation, the Radical party could mobilize popular support and stay in power. He argues that combined patronage at national and municipal levels, symbolic legitimacy for opening up the political system, and active yet changing policies won support from the working class and the labor unions.¹⁹

A third political force that has received new scholarly attention is the Socialist party. Socialists participated in elections held between 1932 and 1943, that legitimized the system set up by the *Concordancia* and, eventually, opened the party leadership to accusations of complicity with fraud, and neglecting the interests of the working class. This criticism became part of the explanation of the party's

dramatic collapse and decline in relevance following Peronism's rise in 1944-1946. A fundamental work in the new scholarship on Argentine socialism is the volume edited by Hernán Camarero and Carlos Herrera covering the history of the Socialist party since its inception. The editors' introduction and the chapter by Juan Carlos Portantiero downplay the image of a homogeneous party under rigid leadership, shedding light instead on a fragmented party. In this sense, they build on earlier contributions by Maria Cristina Tortti and Marian Luzzi to show that the Socialist party was informed by different ideological traditions and was keenly aware of both international and national developments.²⁰

In this way, the picture that emerges from these new works reveals political forces very heterogeneous in terms of both ideology and praxis, a result that challenges the emphasis in the previous scholarship on monolithic actors. One particular example of this heterogeneity can be appreciated in the analysis of the impact of the Great Depression on the country's economic structures and the subsequent development of new economic policies of state intervention adopted in the 1930s and early 1940s. The economic policies of the period have already received major attention given their location between Argentina's traditional export economy and Peronism's expansion of state intervention and industrialization.²¹ Various works have pointed out that policies adopted by the national government in 1930-1943, such as the establishment of exchange control and the creation of the Central Bank and boards to control and regulate production of different commodities, did not reflect a consistent ideological plan but were rather a pragmatic response to the economic crisis that had arisen from different sources.²²

On the policy range and depth of conservative groups in power, Béjar has added details on the conflicts between conservative legislators and government officials in 1932 and 1933, when the former demanded that the national government suspend foreign debt payments and take more decisive action to help bankrupt agricultural producers based on the needs imposed by changes in the international economy. Tulio Halperín Donghi and Jorge Nállim add evidence on diverse economic positions within the ruling coalition, which ranged from the defense of the traditional export economy to the more statist and interventionist models proposed by figures such as the conservative governor of Buenos Aires, Manuel Fresco.²³ Equivalent policy ranges have been identified for the Radical and Socialist parties. For the Radical Party, Persello expanded Cattaruzza's study of the Party's magazine *Hechos e Ideas* with an analysis of economic projects and ideas defended by Radicals in the National Congress. They show that in a difficult economic environment at the local and international levels and within a party whose control was disputed by many groups and factions, Radicals expressed a variety of economic positions as part of the political struggle against

the *Concordancia*. These positions included the defense of traditional classical liberalism, identified with free-market, *laissez-faire* ideas; a new economic liberalism that could reconcile state economic intervention and social justice with political democracy; and even calls for state intervention within a non-liberal framework. Interestingly, Socialists also expressed a similar tension in their economic ideas. While the party leadership maintained a strict defense of economic liberalism linked to the export economy, Portantiero and Luzzi identify the influence of European Social Democracy in some party groups, which sought to reconcile political democracy, socialism, and state intervention.²⁴

In all these manners, the revelation of heterogeneous political discourses in each major political movement during this period broke with what earlier scholars had concluded as more fixed policy boundaries. Discovery of tremendous policy range and depth helps chart the fragmentation of major political actors as well as a frequent coincidence of policy positions across party lines. This not only dismisses facile labels and political characterizations; it also offers meaning to the so-called “infamous decade” not as an interregnum but as a period of political ferment that shaped mid-twentieth century Argentine politics.

International perspectives and local dimensions

New studies on the history of the 1930s and early 1940s have also paid renewed attention to the international dimension of political and ideological developments in Argentina. This dimension already figured prominently in scholarship on political, cultural, and ideological trends and groups that tended to be outward-looking, like *Sur*, the cosmopolitan literary magazine that brought together Argentine and foreign contributors and actively participated in the debates of those years.²⁵ The broad scholarship on nationalist and anti-liberal groups has also stressed international frameworks and the circulation of ideas and people, as is the case of Sandra McGee Deutsch’s comparative study of the right in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, and Federico Finchelstein’s more recent work on the appropriation and reinterpretation of European Fascism among Argentine rightist groups.²⁶ Several excellent studies have placed local political and ideological developments within the context of the Second World War. Such is the case of Ronald Newton’s analysis of the real extent of Nazi penetration into Argentina as well as Mario Rapoport’s classical study on Argentine relations with the United States and Great Britain during the World War.²⁷ In the same line, works by Loris Zanatta, Roberto di Stefano, and Susana Bianchi locate the political mobilization and increasing movement to the right of the Argentine Catholic Church within the broader framework of international pro-

cesses (such as the rise of European fascism and anti-liberalism) and debates within the Catholic Church at a global level.²⁸

The heavy impact of international developments in Argentina is tied to a historically strong immigrant population that kept cultural, ideological, and social links with the North Atlantic world. This attention to the international context now appears clearly in the new works on political parties mentioned above. Portantiero and Luzzi, expanding Tortti's research, describe the influence on the Socialist Party of contemporary trends in European social democracy since the 1920s. Similarly, Persello expands Cattaruzza's analysis of anti-fascist and leftist Spanish and Italian groups in the Radical party in the 1930s. This is the specific topic of one of Halperín Donghi's books, a companion to his larger interpretative and documentary compilation regarding the political debates of 1930-1945.²⁹ He clearly shows how ideological and political debates in Argentina in this period were not only shaped by local developments but also heavily influenced by an international crisis that would lead to the Second World War.

Other works provide new perspectives on political actors and locate them within explicit international frameworks. For example, new works have focused in trends and ideologies previously ignored such as anti-fascism and liberalism. The dominant negative view on the 1930s and early 1940s, with its focus on the decadence of liberalism and the rise of Peronism, marginalized a careful analysis of political and social groups across party lines that were affiliated with those ideologies. Filling that gap, Andrés Bisso has provided an excellent and detailed analysis of anti-fascism in Argentina between 1922 and 1946, accompanied by a solid compilation of primary documents.³⁰ Comprised of varied political and intellectual groups across the political and social spectrum, the local anti-fascist movement was deeply influenced by transnational ideologies and groups, as well as by specific national circumstances. Bisso shows that the growing visibility of anti-fascism throughout the 1930s and its capacity to mobilize different groups went, in a seemingly contradictory manner, hand in hand with tensions and fractures within and among the related political and intellectual groups that, eventually, prevented their consolidation into a united front.

Another related perspective is the one offered by Jorge Nállim on liberalism in Argentina in the 1930s and 1940s.³¹ His analysis shows that while liberalism underwent a profound crisis, at the same time it provided the legitimizing ideology for different political and intellectual groups, from conservatives to Socialists, as well as for writers and scholars. Paying attention to developments at home and abroad, these groups emphasized different elements of liberal ideology in cultural, economic, and political fields and used them to legitimize partisan positions and inter-party alliances, such as the anti-fascist front that opposed the *Concordancia* in the late 1930s and early 1940s, which became the anti-Peronist

front in 1943-1945. From their analyses, Bisso and Nállim prove, on the one hand, that anti-fascism and liberalism did overlap but were not synonymous—not all anti-fascism was liberal, as demonstrated by the most radical groups in the left, and not all liberalism was anti-fascist, as shown by conservative liberal groups within the *Concordancia*. On the other hand, they show that the political crisis of the country in the 1930s and early 1940s that ended in the military coup of June 1943 was not only due to exclusionary practices such as electoral fraud implemented by the ruling conservative sectors, but also due to divisions within every political force, coupled with their inability to consolidate a united front or to formulate a strategy to break the consolidated conservative hold on power, which played a major role.

Those works are part of the growing scholarship on anti-fascist cultural and political groups. Along that line, Ricardo Pasolini has studied the international networks of solidarity towards the Italian anti-fascist diaspora built by intellectuals and political organizations such as the Communist, Radical, and Socialist parties and gathered in publications and institutions such as the *Asociación de Intelectuales, Artistas, Escritores y Periodistas* (AIAPE), *Hechos e Ideas*, and the Colegio Libre de Estudios Superiores (CLES).³² Osvaldo Graciano has also contributed to a better understanding of the intellectual networks built by a prominent group of leftist intellectuals, mainly anarchists and socialists, between the University Reform of 1918 and the fall of Perón in 1955. His book's central section, on the 1930-1943 period, deals with the process of politicization of many of these intellectuals in the political context of the 1930 coup and its aftermath. Graciano explores their professional and social networks, alongside the cultural and professional projects they developed from institutions such as the *Universidad Popular Alejandro Korn* in La Plata.³³ Germán Friedmann offers an excellent study of the presence and networks of anti-Nazi Germans in Argentina during the 1930s and 1940s,³⁴ complementing previously developed scholarship on Spanish Republican exiles and the impact of the Spanish Civil War in Argentina.

Furthermore, the understanding of anti-fascism and liberalism within an international framework has been further illuminated by the addition of a gender perspective. The best example is Sandra McGee Deutsch's book on the transnational dimension of Jewish women in Argentina. It details the active involvement of many Jewish women in a variety of political groups, such as the Socialist and Communist parties, as well as in the anti-Fascist organizations of the 1930s.³⁵ Moreover, her current work on the Junta de la Victoria is expanding the research on the role of women in the anti-fascist front of the early 1940s.³⁶ This all-female organization, created in 1941, followed in general the same ideas and arguments voiced by other anti-fascist organizations, such as *Acción*

Argentina, and publications such as *Argentine Libre*. The Junta thus shared with those spaces its main goal—support for the Allies in the war—and its fate—it was closed by the military regime installed in 1943, although it was eventually allowed to renew activities in 1945 for a second, yet less relevant stage, until 1947. What makes the Junta interesting is that it attracted women from varied social and ideological backgrounds, achieved a membership of more than 40,000, and established branches throughout the country. Mobilized mainly by suffragists and communists, its history provides an interesting perspective on wider political and ideological struggles.

McGee Deutsch's research is in close dialogue with others who have studied the transnational experience and active participation of Jewish people in political and cultural institutions in Argentina in the 1930s and 1940s, such as the essays on Argentina available in the book edited by Jeffrey Lesser and Raanan Rein in 2008 on Jewish Latin Americans.³⁷ Indeed, these studies on Jewish groups and their political background is linked to a renewed interest in anti-fascist Catholic groups. This line of research has been pursued by José Zanca and Adriana Valobra, whose ongoing research has shed light on the trajectory of a group of anti-fascist Catholic women in the 1930s and 1940s. Reacting against a Catholic Church increasingly dominated by male-centered and anti-liberal trends, these women reclaimed a space for social and political action from a place of double marginalization, as women and as anti-fascists. This space opened possibilities for collaboration with other female groups, political parties, and ideologies, including anti-fascist organizations such as the Junta de la Victoria and Communists.³⁸

Attention to the international dimension of Argentine political, ideological, and cultural developments at the national level and mostly focused on Buenos Aires has not precluded work on provincial and local levels. Several scholars have moved to explore politics in the provinces that, as Béjar did for Buenos Aires, illuminate the broader political contours of those years. Darío Macor has provided extensive research on the Progressive Democratic Party in Santa Fe, showing how this provincial force from conservative origins became in the 1930s one of the major actors in the national arena—through the actions of its leader and Senatorial representative, Lisandro de la Torre—at the same time that it was attentive to its local provincial base.³⁹ Provincial politics in the 1930s and early 1940s have also been considered by studies that trace the origins of Peronism from different areas of the country. Such is the case of Mark Healey's recent book on the San Juan's earthquake of 1944, which played a major role in launching Perón's career and became a key issue for building state power at both local and national levels. The book's detailed analysis of San Juan's economic and political structures in the 1930s and early 1940s shows the intrinsic connection between local and national politics, in a province and city riven by

socioeconomic inequalities and political fragmentation.⁴⁰ Similarly, Darío Macor and César Teah edited a book on the construction of Peronism in the provinces that also sheds light on provincial political dynamics upon which Peronism would be built after 1943.⁴¹

Other studies have gone from provincial to local politics, specifically to the city of Buenos Aires and following the path of scholars who studied the city of Buenos Aires in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such is the case of Hilda Sabato's work on politics and public life in 1852-1880—complemented more recently by Pilar González Bernaldo de Quiró's study on politics and the creation of a public sphere in the first half of nineteenth century—as well as Leandro Gutiérrez and Luis Alberto Romero's analysis of popular sectors.⁴² As these authors show, the people of Buenos Aires created many organizations with popular participation that included neighborhood development groups (*sociedades de fomento*), libraries, mutual aid associations, and unions. The focus of these scholars is not only the realm of formal politics, identified with political parties and elections, but more importantly those associations through which social and political bonds were created. The existence of these kinds of associations in the nineteenth century, for example, allowed people to have a voice in politics despite the absence of fair elections.

Theoretically, this fruitful approach to politics draws from different authors and trends, from Jürgen Habermas' concept of public sphere to social and cultural history. This framework has also been applied to the 1930s and early 1940s by Luciano de Privitellio's study of Buenos Aires's politics in the interwar years.⁴³ He connects the transformation of the city's politics between 1917 and 1941, related to the history of the city council, to the role of associations such as the *sociedades de fomento* in the interaction between society, political parties, and the municipal state. Following this thread, Joel Horowitz has considered the relationship of soccer clubs and politics in Buenos Aires.⁴⁴ Soccer's popularity and massive following, along with the clubs' strong roots in the city's neighborhoods, necessarily attracted the attention of politicians and political parties, interested in securing the mobilization of popular support that had become indispensable following the Ley Sáenz Peña in 1912. The construction of politics at the intersection of urban geography, social life, and formal politics is also behind Lila Caimari's work on crime and journalism in Buenos Aires city during the interwar years.⁴⁵ Building on her previous research on crime for the earlier part of the century,⁴⁶ she links the city's rapid urban transformation to changes in patterns of crime, how and what was reported as crime in the press, and the development of the police apparatus in the city. Although Caimari differs from Horowitz and de Privitellio in that she does not deal with political or ideologi-

cal developments per se, her analysis challenges historians to understand the specific contexts of state-society relations in a changing world.

This kind of social and cultural approach is relevant, as is its application to theoretical frameworks for understanding the 1930-1943 period, because it has yielded excellent results in other countries and periods of Latin American history. In this way, this approach combines insights from cultural and social history with broader analyses of state power and political dynamics, opening exciting new areas for research on this period.

Conclusion

What are the main conclusions that can be drawn from the works on politics and ideology considered here? What do they reveal about the period 1930-1943, what are their theoretical insights and shortcomings? In the first place, a careful assessment of the history of these years seems particularly relevant in Argentina's current political context. The revival of historical revisionism, with its associated Manichaeic ideas about the Argentine past, highlights the relevance of the recent historiography on those years as it helps correct distortions and mistakes originating from explicit political concerns rather than serious academic research.

Second, it is clear that the political crisis of the country between 1930 and 1943 evolved in a context of ideological fluidity when global processes—the Great Depression, the rise of European totalitarianisms, the Spanish Civil War, and the Second World War—were processed and interpreted within the particular national context—the military coup of 1930, the worsening conflict between the ruling conservative coalition and opposition parties, the increasing weight of the army and the Catholic Church in politics, and the growing visibility of anti-liberal groups and ideologies. In a context of fragmented political forces, these new studies show that the binary categories that the different political actors used at that time and that eventually influenced later studies—democracy/dictatorship, oligarchy/popular sectors, and so on—do not withstand closer examination. The varied groups that came together in the failed projects of the Popular Front in 1935-1936 or the first Democratic Union in 1943 and the internal divisions within the different political forces witness this very dynamic and fragmented scenario.

Another interesting contradiction that emerges from these different works is that despite the military coup and ensuing military regime in 1930-1932, the growing presence of anti-liberal groups and ideologies and the Catholic Church, and the political crisis that slowly evolved throughout the long decade, the country did not slip toward any alternative political system such as fascism. In this sense, evidence confirms Halperin Donghi's and Fernando Devoto's conclusions on the

resilience of the republican liberal structure based on the Constitution of 1853. Halperín Donghi sharply observed that the Concordancia's electoral violations also confirmed the validity of the broken liberal democratic principles. In the same line, Devoto concludes that while democracy did not consolidate in Argentina after the Sáenz Peña law, neither did authoritarianism.⁴⁷ This increasing disconnect between a liberal constitutional order and rhetoric and the actions of political players was a central part of the crisis of the political system that led to the military coup of June 1943. However, the military regime's attempts to refashion Argentina's structure along anti-liberal and Catholic lines in 1943-1944 would also fail and led eventually to Perón's election in 1946, who would preside over a regime that combined the old structure with new policies, ideas, and practices.

Finally, the new studies on the 1930s and 1940s indicate several fruitful areas for future research. Attention to both international and local frameworks of political and ideological development has resulted in a more nuanced understanding of a period which, until very recently, was trapped in rigid, outmoded categories. Bridging those two perspectives with the insights of social and cultural history enriches the field. In this sense, McGee Deutsch's study of transnational Jewish women and their important role in numerous political and social institutions in Argentina represents an excellent model of the intersection of political and ideological history, with trends related to social history such as gender and ethnicity, which might be employed by future scholars of the period. Also, the works by De Privitello, Caimari, and Horowitz on different social aspects of the city of Buenos Aires open interesting perspectives on the multiple and multifaceted areas of interaction between state and society that could result, in Joel Migdal's words, in a veritable anthropology of state-society relations.⁴⁸ And the recent new wave of studies on Peronism, with their emphasis on culture, popular consumption, and gender, could also lead to research in those areas for the 1930-1943 period.⁴⁹ In this way, the new historiography on the 1930s and early 1940s is redefining our understanding of a relevant period of twentieth-century Argentine history.

Notes

- 1 I want to express my deep gratitude to David Sheinin and Jessica Stites Mor for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.
- 2 The Instituto's institutional goals, members, and activities can be consulted in its website, <http://institutonacionalmanueldorrego.com/>. A furious polemic between the Instituto's supporters and opponents appeared and can be followed in the pages of the newspapers *La Nación* and *Página 12* on the days that followed its creation.

- 3 Michael Goebbel, *Argentina's Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).
- 4 An excellent overview of the 1930s and early 1940s seen from different angles is available in the collected volume edited by Alejandro Cattaruzza, *Crisis económica, avance del estado e incertidumbre política, 1930-1943*, Nueva Historia Argentina, vol. 7 (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2001).
- 5 On nationalist and historical revisionist writers, see Goebbel, *Argentina's Partisan Past*; Tulio Halperín Donghi, *El revisionismo argentino como visión decadentista de la historia nacional* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2005); Diana Quattrocchi-Woison, *Los males de la memoria. Historia y política en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1995); Alejandro Cattaruzza, "Algunas reflexiones sobre el revisionismo histórico," in *La historiografía argentina en el siglo XX*, Vol. 1, ed. Fernando Devoto (Buenos Aires: CEAL, 1993), 113-39.
- 6 Gabriel del Mazo, *Caída de la república representativa: el contubernio y la "Década Infame", 1922-1945*, vol. 2. of *El radicalismo: ensayo sobre su historia y doctrina* (Buenos Aires: Gure, 1959); Félix Luna, *Alvear* (Buenos Aires: Hyspamérica, 1986).
- 7 José Luis Romero, *Las ideas políticas en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1956).
- 8 Alberto Ciria, *Parties and Power in Modern Argentina, 1930-1946* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974).
- 9 Robert Potash, *The Army and Politics in Argentina, 1928-45. Yrigoyen To Perón* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); Alain Rouquié, *Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina, 1928-1943* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1981) and *Poder militar y sociedad política en la Argentina, 1943-1973* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1982).
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