

Polity IV Country Report 2006: Argentina

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| <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2005</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2006</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>23</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | Score: | 2005 | 2006 | Change | Polity: | 8 | 8 | 0 | Democ: | 8 | 8 | 0 | Autoc: | 0 | 0 | 0 | Durable: | | 23 | | Tentative: | | No | | |
| Score: | 2005 | 2006 | Change | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Polity: | 8 | 8 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Democ: | 8 | 8 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Autoc: | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Durable: | | 23 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tentative: | | No | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SCODE | ARG | CCODE | 160 | Date of Report | 15 December 2007 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Polity IV Component Variables | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| XRREG | XRCOMP | XROPEN | XCONST | PARREG | PARCOMP | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| End Date | 30 October 1983 | | Begin Date | 31 October 1983 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Polity Fragmentation: No | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Constitution | 1853/1994 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Executive(s) | President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (Front for Victory Alliance); directly elected, 28 October 2007, 44.9% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Legislature | Bicameral: Chamber of Deputies (257 seats; directly elected, half elected every two years to four-year term; most recent elections, 28 October 2007) Front for Victory Alliance (FVA): 153 Radical Civic Union (UCR): 30 Civic Coalition Confederation (CCC): 27 Republican Proposal: 13 Other parties: 34 Senate (72 seats; directly elected, one-third elected every two years to six-year term; most recent elections, 28 October 2007) FVA: 44 UCR: 10 Other parties: 9 Provincial parties: 9 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Judiciary | Supreme Court | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Narrative Description:

Executive Recruitment: Competitive Elections (8)

Argentina's long tradition of political turmoil and authoritarian rule was halted by the establishment of an elected civilian government in 1982. Since the return of civilian rule in 1982 presidential elections have been considered free and fair. The severe economic crisis that wracked Argentina in 2001, leading to widespread popular protests in December of that year, forced the resignation of President Fernando de la Rúa (elected December 1999), the collapse of his Alianza government, and a quick succession of interim

presidents. However, the crisis and political instability was handled through constitutional due process and finally resulted in the election of a new president by a special joint session of congress and provincial governors (the second such election in an eight-day period). Eduardo Duhalde of the Peronist Justicialist Party (PJ) was elected president on 1 January 2002, to complete de la Rúa's term in office. In the run-up to the 2003 elections the Justicialist Party split into competing factions. During the first round balloting two of the PJ candidates, Carlos Saul Menem (24%) and Nestor Kirchner (22%) emerged as top vote-getters and a runoff election was scheduled for 18 May 2003. However, anticipating an impending loss, Menem withdrew from the election on 14 May and Kirchner was declared the winner and inaugurated President on 25 May 2003. The Kirchnerists consolidated their control of the Peronist Justicialist Party during Nestor Kirchner's term and were able to hold the president's office for a second term when his wife, Cristina Fernández, won the 28 October 2007 presidential election in the first round (44.9%) with the required ten-percent margin over her closest competitor from a slate of fourteen candidates; she was inaugurated on 10 December 2007.

Executive Constraints: Near Parity (6)

While the Argentine constitution limits the powers of the executive, nevertheless, President Menem was able to dominate the political arena in this country for a decade (1989-1999). President Menem sought to rule by decree, often bypassing Congress, and limited the oversight powers of the judiciary by packing the Supreme Court with political supporters. Through his political skills Menem was able to change the constitution to allow for a second (although not a third) term in office. While the 1994 constitution attempted to increase horizontal accountability in government, Menem's dominance over the institutions of governance was not significantly altered. As head of the dominant political force in Argentina, the Peronist Justicialist Party (PJ), Menem continued to exert considerable power over the institutions of governance. Fernando de la Rúa, who was elected president in December 1999, however, was unable to rule with the same decree of impunity as his predecessor. Given that the Congress, judiciary and regional governorships were all dominated by members of the Peronist party, and that de la Rúa was the candidate of a compromise among the opposition Alliance coalition, the power of the executive branch was significantly reduced. The severe economic crisis that consumed Argentina in 2001 and led to the collapse of the Alianza coalition government, the resignation of President de la Rúa in December 2001, and a quick succession of interim presidents, finally resulted in the 1 January 2002, special election of Peronist Eduardo Duhalde as President. Duhalde was elected by a joint session of parliament and provincial governors to complete de la Rúa's term.

The judiciary has become increasingly accomplished and independent since the return of civilian rule in 1982. In June 2003, at the urging of President Nestor Kirchner, the impeachment commission of the Chamber of Deputies began proceedings against Julio Nazareno, President of the Supreme Court, and his eight colleagues, charging them *inter alia* with corruption (Nazareno subsequently resigned). Moreover, in an attempt to limit the politicization of the judiciary in the future, on 19 June 2003 Kirchner signed a decree limiting the power of the president to appoint justices. Nominees would now be screened by professional panels before being accepted or rejected by the Senate.

The Supreme Court flexed its increasing institutional power in June 2005 when it directly confronted the military establishment over the issue of amnesty. In a decisive ruling the judges repealed the laws promulgated in the 1980s which provided members of the armed forces with immunity from prosecution for crimes committed during Argentina's "dirty war" of the 1970s. By the end of 2005 over 1,000 former military personnel were awaiting prosecution for their past crimes.

On 24 November 2004, Congress approved two separate laws granting new economic powers to the president. The lower house voted to extend the "economic emergency" law enacted in January 2002 meant to temporarily address the economic crisis of the previous year, while the upper house approved a new law that would give the head of the Cabinet power to redistribute funds without congressional approval. While the government defended the need for the new powers, claiming the economy was still in "emergency mode," some analysts suggested that it was a violation of the constitution and eroded separation of powers. President Kirchner issued more than 200 presidential decrees during his term.

Political Participation: Democratic Retrenchment: Limited and/or Decreasing Overt Coercion (9)

Political participation in Argentina, while close to being "competitive" in nature, still suffers from factional tendencies. Personality-based factions and social movements, rather than political parties per se, continue to define much of the political arena in Argentina. Since 1946 Argentina has been a country divided

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between Peronist and anti-Peronist (and allies of each in the armed forces) coalitions. However, despite this fundamental factional division in Argentine politics, intense political rivalries *inside* the Peronist movement have long dominated and shaped political competition in this country. Neither left-wing nor right-wing in orientation, Peronism is more like a political club with a diverse membership and decentralized centers of political loyalties than a unified party sustained by a common ideology and command structure. While the Peronist presidential administrations of Alfonsín (1983-89), Menem (1989-99) and Kirchner (2003-2007) have sought to weaken the party's traditional ties with the military and have moved away from the central role of the state in the economy (both key elements of Peronist governance in the past), nevertheless, factional struggles inside the Peronist party persist. These internal struggles within the Peronist movement were vividly demonstrated in October 2006 when some 40 people were injured in clashes during a ceremony transferring the remains of three-time president Juan Perón to his country estate. This violence was reminiscent of Perón's return from exile in 1973 in which over 400 people died in fighting between Peronist factions.

Despite the electoral loss of the Peronist candidate for President in the 1999 elections, Peronism continues to be the dominant political force in this country. The legacy of Peronism as a hegemonic political movement still shines through in the manner in which it organizes and mobilizes its followers and in its treatment of opposition forces. However, with the electoral success of the opposition Alliance coalition in 1999 we may be seeing a gradual change toward institutional competition. Nevertheless, just as the Peronist Party is plagued by internal factional struggles, the Alliance, which is composed of the middle class-based Radical Civic Union (UCR) and the left-wing Front for a Country in Solidarity (FrepaSO), has tenuous institutional foundations at best. The weakness of President de la Rúa's Alliance government (1999-2003) first became apparent with the resignation, in October 2000, of Vice President Carlos Álvarez, the leader of FrepaSO. In March 2001, the congress passed legislation known as the "Competitiveness Law," delegating special powers under Article 76 of the constitution to the executive for a period of one year to deal with a looming financial crisis. A late November 2001 run on the banks resulted in government restrictions and the seizure of pension accounts. A general strike was called in response and intense popular protests resulted in riots in the capital and other major cities during which 30 people were killed. President de la Rúa and his entire cabinet resigned on 20 December 2001. In the wake of de la Rúa's resignation, Argentina witnessed a procession of four interim presidents in the span of two weeks (all four were members of the Peronist party).

Early elections were held on 27 April 2003 and revealed the deep fissures within the Peronist party. In these elections PJ-candidate Kirchner was named president when rival PJ-candidate Menem withdrew from the runoff election scheduled for 18 May 2003. President Kirchner immediately instituted a purge of the high command of the armed forces, senior command of the federal police force, as well as the Supreme Court. The 2005 legislative elections solidified the dominance of the Kirchner faction within the Argentine political system as his allies came to control the Senate and became the largest political block in the lower house. The Kirchnerists continued to consolidate their control of the party with their victory in October 2007 general elections; anti-Kirchner factions of the Peronist party held only nine seats in the Chamber of Deputies and four seats in the Senate.