



Democracy, Militarism, and Nationalism in Argentina, 1930-1966: An Interpretation (Lilas Latin American Monograph)

Marvin Goldwert

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Until 1930, Argentina was one of the great hopes for stable democracy in Latin America. Argentines themselves believed in the destiny of their nation to become the leading Latin American country in wealth, power, and culture. But the revolution of 1930 unleashed the scourges of modern militarism and chronic instability in the land. Between 1930 and 1966, the Argentine armed forces, or factions of the armed forces, overthrew the government five times.

For several decades, militarism was the central problem in Argentine political life. In this study, Marvin Goldwert interprets the rise, growth, and development of militarism in Argentina from 1930 to 1966. The tortuous course of Argentine militarism is explained through an integrating hypothesis. The army is viewed as a “power factor,” torn by a permanent dichotomy of values, which rendered it incapable of bringing modernization to Argentina. Caught between conflicting drives for social order and modernization, the army was an ambivalent force for change. First frustrated by incompetent politicians (1916–1943), the army was later driven by Colonel Juan D. Perón into an uneasy alliance with labor (1943–1955). Peronism initially represented the means by which army officers could have their cake—nationalistic modernization—and still eat it in peace, with the masses organized in captive unions tied to an authoritarian state.

After 1955, when Perón was overthrown, a deeply divided army struggled to contain the remnants of its own dictatorial creation. In 1966, the army, dedicated to staunch anti-Peronism, again seized the state and revived the dream of reconciling social order and modernization through military rule.

Although militarism has been a central problem in Argentine political life, it is also the fever that suggests deeper maladies in the body politic. Marvin Goldwert seeks to relate developments in the military to the larger political, social, and economic developments in Argentine history. The army and its factions are viewed as integral parts of the whole political spectrum during the period under study.

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