THE POLITICS OF ARGENTINA TODAY:
HUMAN RIGHTS AND KIRCHNERISMO

1. INTRODUCTION

Latin America has suffered to the whip of coups, ranging from Argentina or Chile to Uruguay, however it was only a couple of decades back that Argentinians faced the darkest side of dictatorship. As Deborah Norden puts it, Latin Americans developed a strange attachment for their militias, which were replaced beyond the jurisdiction of law. Juntas believed not only in the impunity given by power, they reserved the rights to impose terror as a disciplinary mechanism of control (Norden 1996). In this vein, Freddy Timmermann in his book *Violencia de Texto, Violencia de Contexto*, explains convincingly that the Cold War played a crucial role in the configuration to red-scare in Latin America. Governments, much prone to liberalism, devoted considerable time and resources to struggle against communism. Paradoxically, their obsessions led to what specialists know as “dirty wars”, Timmermann adds. At that time, social imaginary valorized the belief that the quest for resources to achieve the material success was more important than history. Of course, like US, Chile has its tragic 9/11 (in 1973), where a coup conducted by General Augusto Pinochet overthrew the constitutional president Salvador Allende. This event not only was a blow against democratic institutions, but also paved the ways for the advent of new economic policies for the country and workforce (Timmermann, 2008). As a result of this, citizenry disengaged from the politic fields. This facilitated the thing for liberal policy-makers in 90s decade, that imported neoliberalism as a valid solution for enhancing governance in the region. The violence adopted by Juntas not only destroyed the political being, but also the trust in politics (Timmermann, 2015). Unlike Chile where the state monopolized the use of violence to daylight, Juntas in Argentina installed a parallel state, where the arrests were illegally conducted in the secrecy of night. Tactics of this nature were advised by French advisers who had coped with Algerian resistance. Los desaparecidos, which means forced-disappeared dissidents, became in an “archetype of injustice and brutality in Argentina. At some extent, as Korstanje observed, the dilemma of “desaparecidos”, reminds us not only the power of religion, which is based on an absent body as the case of Christ, Gilgamesh, even Siegfried, but places victims as heroes. Given certain conditions, it may be a fertile ground for the configuration of a cult. Not surprisingly, “Kirchnerismo” an Argentinian political movement ignited by Nestor and Cristina Kirchner (current president) embraced the desaparecidos’ cause, giving assistance to human right organizations but bringing military officials to prosecutions (Korstanje 2012). Any religious cult is based on the principle of apotheosis; this means the ascendancy in spirit and body to heaven. Kirchnerismo
envisaged the possibility to create a cult to produce a new type of politics, which nothing has to do with populism. Although the specialized literature suggests that Latin American governments are prone to “populism” (Bonet, 2007; Biglieri Perello, 2007; Cantamutto, 2013; Korstanje, 2012; Dagatti, 2012), the present essay review goes in the opposite direction. In this respect, Kirchnerismo is creating a new platform to make politics in the postmodern world, where the old concept of reality sets the pace to a paranoid-schizoid atmosphere of divergence. What are the elements of this new cult?,

a) The needs of adopting politics as a platform of redemption.
b) The allegory of confrontational politics to struggle against evilness (in this case the liberal market)
c) The absent of bodies, which is enrooted in the archetype of desaparecidos.
d) The redemption of founding hero corresponded with Nestor Kirchner’s death.
e) The needs of imagining a hell, which is symbolized by the return to financial crisis of 2001 (produced by Cavallo’s convertibility system).

All these elements formed together the fields for the production of a new cult that introduces the religious factor to create dependency and subordination; even sometimes overriding in the democratic institutions. However, what is more important, we have no evidence (nor antecedents) of governments who use conspiracy as a valid tactic to create two bi-polar worlds. In this text, we strongly believe that the reason of desaparecidos and Kirchnerismo are inextricably inter-twined.

2. ONE WORLD / MANY WORLDS

The problem of identity has traversed the western philosophical thinking over centuries. From Oedipus, to Moses, founding heroes are educated in a surrogate family without knowing their real identity. Nonetheless, this is not an obstacle in order for the identity to be changed. Unlike ancient Greece, where the kinship was unbreakable, the postmodernism introduced a new way how identity is lived. Today, it is possible to select those aspects of personality, and identity which should be ignored, adopting new archetypes to the extent changing sex or genre (Giddens, 1997). Although, according to the current law any change of child’s identity is dealt with very seriously, no less true is that we adopt “flexible” masks according to our wishes. Therefore, postmodernism produced new types of subjectivities where the old notion of world or reality diluted. As David Harvey (1989) noted, the Enlightenment that postulated the age of reason as a means to place “an authoritative voice” in aesthetic, ethics, and religion. It represented an intellectual project that encouraged an orderly vision of the world. Beyond individual perception, the external world was immutable, irrefutable, and transcendent. As a result of Arab-Israeli war and its oil embargo, West faced serious problems to keep the long-scale means of production. The sense of only one truth not only collapsed according to the downfall of economic empire, but the same conceptualization of reality was radically changed. Instead of one World, postmodernity brought to politics the belief everybody is an
individual. The consumer sophistication and its perception of the world put the deals of reason in jeopardy. Most certainly, as the Film Matrix shows, the boundaries of reality are being drawn by external forces, as a virtual intelligence that supposedly lead humans to be vats of energy. As a result of this, the decision making process is given by the fact of facing a terrible reality, or enthralling into a more comfortable dream-world (Nixon, 2005; Korsmeyer, 2005). In the terms of Van Fraasen, world as God seems to be abstractions of metaphysic; both are simulacra of real objects as continuance of illusion. In this radical discussion, the ability to doubt of external world, leads “psyche” towards realism (Fraasen, 2002). As Erion and Smith put it (2005), the self may dissociate a dream from reality, simply because it introduces the doubt as a mediator with environment. Beyond our dreams, only doubts ignites a radical rupture with illusion, resolving the dilemma of hyper-reality, as it has been posed by the postmodern philosophy (Erion & Smith, 2005). Is conspiracy resolving the inconsistencies of reality?

In the current times, the fascination of politicians for the theory of conspiracy is associated to the power it confers to masters. Although the theory of conspiracy was deemed as a pathology by classical literature (Lipset & Raab 1978; Groh 1987; Hofman 1993; Catron & Harmon 1981; Alhouse 1983), since it leads to “totalitarian Mind” (Arendt, 2013), recently, some scholars present conspiracy as a key factor of politics. As David Kelman argues, counterfeits politics takes conspiracy to enhance the legitimacy of the citizenry. Not surprisingly, Kelman adds, the strategies of populism, in Latin America and US, consists in using conspiracy to divert attention respecting to those points which are in dispute. The efficacy of modern politics to consolidate their hegemony corresponds with cutting the reality in two parts. In respect to this, Kelman is convinced that the secret rests on the legitimacy of silence creating two alternative circuits, official and unofficial. It represents a disestablishing event that intersects both stories. The credibility of one story is linked to the secret that allows the discovering of the other. At time, the theory of conspiracy reveals a problem a plot emerges in order for elite to keeps the control of society. Concerning not only dictatorship but democracies, the “counterfeit politics”, takes from conspiracy an excuse to impose policies otherwise would be neglected by lay-people. Any attempt to decipher the plot, validates the secrecy of politics,

“Politics is not based on an ideology decided in advance, but it is rather constituted through a specific type of narrative that is often called conspiracy theory. This type of theory is always a machination, that is, a narrative mechanism that secretes, as it were, ideological labels such as the right or the left” (p. 8).

Since the efficacy to pit one against another band alludes to create a dialectics of competition, then every conspiracy narrative connotes to a double structure, where the visible story is continuously eroded by a secret one.
More interesting in explaining the political struggle as an unlimited game, than a hierarchal line of power, Kelman suggests that conspiracy seems not to be a symptom of a much declining crisis, but the necessary condition for one discourse sets the pace to others. Politics, in his terms, can be defined as an illusory state of emergency where the sense of community (we) is opposed to others, who are the enemies (they). Conspiracy narratives are always enrooted in a near future, but never takes room in reality. In this type of simulacra, it may be remarked that not only conspiracy produces a paradoxical situation. At once politics is reproduced citizens are subject to experience threatening events. Fear plays a crucial role in conspiracy-related policies. Unless otherwise solved, the modern politics consolidate only where the official discourse is undermined and therefore, replaced by another parallel voice. Since conspiracy works from imagination, it needs from a gap to fulfill with allegories, story-telling and fictions. This hidden figure of politics not only is constructed by the secrecy of complot, or a story which never would be verified, but interpelate the official allegory. By means of creating instability, conspiracy theory is used once and once again to enthral elite in the power. Although Kelman’s explanation is eloquent and self-explanatory, we remain unclear on what is kirchnerismo and how it has historically consolidated its hegemony on voting system. Are populism frightened by aristocracies by their high degree of popular acceptance?, or simply they undermine democracy by the tergiversation of public opinion?.

3. WHAT IS KIRCHNERISMO?

Kirchnerismo may be defined as a political Project born by the hands of former president Nestor Kirchner, while reassuming the government by Eduardo Duhalde. Although, in the first days, Kirchner and Duhalde were in agreement, with the passing the time, conflicts arise. Nestor Kirchner was president from 25 May 2003 to 10 December of 2007, seconded by his wife, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner from 10 December 2007 up to date. Cristina and Nestor showed some differences and discrepancies along with economy, politics but the project remained the conceptual basis of what was the struggle for human rights. This project appealed to construct a symbolic archetype of “desaparecidos”, which, as earlier discussed, embraced the cause of “disappeared dissidents in the last bloody dictatorships 1976/1982.

Kirchnerismo opened the doorstop to a new way of producing powers and making politics, as never before was known in Argentina. Bringing to present what has been the “lucha Armada (army struggle) Kirchnerismo enthralled as the only affordable sources to fight against financial corporations and concentrated monopolies. Its doctrine points out that Argentina never became in an industrial power because of the conspiracy of bourgeois elite that prioritized the agro-export model over other systems of production. These monopolies not only ruled the destiny of Argentina over decades, but also led lay people to the financial crisis of 2001. The
success of kirchnerismo to erect its own ideology consists in denouncing the nation faces “hidden forces” which are plotting to affect the nation’s well-being. Nestor and Cristina adopted the theory of conspiracy to divide and rule.

With the passing of time, Kirchnerismo selected Clarin Publishing Group as the main target of its attacks. This corporation and its CEO, Magnetto were accused by the Government not only of plotting with Junta the coups in 1976, but also of taking advantage of this privilege position to create a monopoly of information. Clarin was discredited in order for the public opinion to cover the corruption cases in top ranked politicians. Quite aside from the ideological dispute that confronted detractors and supporters of Clarin, Kirchnerismo used the same tactics to attack the main sources of information. The index of poverty and inflation prepared by I. N. D. E. C (Instituto Nacional de Estadistica y Censo- National Institute of Statistics and Census), suffered a radical intervention which altered the methodologies of research. In the middle of an ideological war, audience was bombarded to contrasting information. Depending on the source, Kirchnerismo and Clarin devoted considerable efforts in declining its credibility each other. It widely recreated a paranoid-schizoid climate that blurred the connection of causes and effects in the events.

As the previous backdrop, Kirchnerismo consolidated its hegemony using some elements of religious cult, as it has been earlier debated. Artists, intellectuals, and political scientists adhered to the doctrine of “Patria o Muerte” (Motherhood or Death) (Skoll & Korstanje 2011; Korstanje 2011, 2012, 2013a). Evidently, the success of this political movement was associated to the production and management of information. However, at some extent, Kirchnerismo created a gap, which facilitated an epistemological rupture resulting in two contrasting realities.

Let’s remind readers, 24 March of 1976, a coup hit the government of Maria Martinez de Peron. Military forces, commanded by General Jorge R. Videla established a new regime of terror and coaction, where dissidents were hosted, jailed and killed in clandestine camps. Although this practice was possible thanks to two decrees issued by Martinez de Peron, no less true is that Videla appealed to violence to destroy not only political opposition but also to weaken the worker unions, in order for his neoliberal politics not to be rejected by workforce. The atmosphere of violence against the Government by terrorist groups was so higher that it called the attention of international public opinion. Armed civil groups known as Montoneros, ERP established a dirty war to kidnap and kill some targeted politicians or Generals (Kekes 2005). Many hosted children were relocated in other families covering their identity, conferring them another new one. Once democracy returned, Raul Alfonsin opened the file of CONADEP, bringing military commanders and civil terrorist to trial. It was unfortunate the next president, Carlos S Menem pardoned to all impris- oned covering a new veil of impunity for people from one and other side of the war committed serious violation to human rights.

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Civil groups did their best to recover these children (known as nietos de desaparecidos) from the hands of their captors. As Guidotti Hernandez (2001) puts it, the legacy of nation state is fraught of violence and blood. Hosting enemy’s offspring is nothing new or monstrous, it relates to a disciplinary mechanism to destroy a human group. Those who had the luck of surviving now are not compatible with their original culture, their identities, even histories. The obliteration of their self is in this case, a new opportunity to open negotiations with the new families (Voigt, 2009). Greek tragedy, from Oedipus is a valid example of how the lack of identity paves the ways for the moral disaster. As Kelman puts it, conspiracy has success in the mystery, because the paths of causalities are being broken into pieces. As a sleuth investigating a crime, conspiracy gives a credible explanation of events. Similarly to Matrix’s synopsis where Neo is reintroduced into a new landscape, conferred of a new identity and name, “nietos” (disappeared grandchildren) are shocked by their own reality. This was the point manipulated by Kirchnerismo to produce politics in Argentina. The creation of an internal enemy doctrine produces a gap, which generates a shock in society. Governments allude to two contrasting bands (realities) to immobilize the protests of the citizens. As a result of this, Kirchnerismo, as many other neoliberal tendencies, keeps the workforce under the control of allegory; even installing nationalism as an ideological discourse. The real world is destroyed to instill two cosmologies. In doing so, the lay-people is para-lyzed (Nixon, 2005; Erion & Smith, 2005).

Basically, as the “nieto recuperado” (recovered grandson) who is conferred of a new identity, once he/she discovers parents have been assassinated by State, Kirchnerismo alters the reality in its own favor (Korstanje 2014). We are not placing the labor of ONGs and civil groups who help “nietos” to retrieve the lost identity, but also explore how kirchnerismo biases the human rights discourse to create politics. The conspiracy is similar to legislate in backs to the society, or negotiate beyond the politics. This is the case of economic powers, as Clarin holding and other concentrated sectors of local economy. In this vein, Kirchnerismo alludes to conspiracy, as a pejorative term, as something which is associated to evildoers, anti-democrat voices which should be silenced. Whenever conspiracy hits Kirchner’s presidency, or surfaced serious denounces of corruption, they are resulted from the lies of those who are traitors of the nation. As this argument given, Kirchnerismo and Nietos Recuperados’ struggle have many commonalities; in other terms, a point of convergence. While Kirchnerismo manipulates the reality to adopt the doubt, “nieto recuperado” starts its own tragedy from the doubt. Once its identity is restored, his biography (this means the experiences, dreams and hopes) are effaced forever. This destruction of real life, is what Kirchnerismo use to polarize the public opinion, enlarging the bridge between two poles. This seems not to be very different than what one may see in Matrix’s film.

At some extent, the recovered grand-son (nieto recuperado) has lived his
life inside a fake. The recovery of his life, connotes not only a new identity, but to the idea the biographical life was subject to what was unreal. As the matrix, where Neo is shocked when realizes his life was a fake, Nietos recuperados is re-channeled to a new life which escapes from biographical real life. From the moment of discovery on, nieto recuperado is pressed to be what in reality he is not. This means that its identity is logically enrooted in future. Its original family name will be only in the future. This is exactly what postmodern cosmology made to lay citizens who may adjust their own identities to their temporal needs and desire. The contemporary identity may be changed according to many folds once and once again without problems. Besides, Kirchnerismo appeals to secrecy and conspiracy as a way of instilling the doubts, to split the reality in two. On one side, we have the official history which can be real but does not sound good.

The death of Alberto N. Nisman, Argentinian prosecutor, who was found at his room gun-shot, seems to be an example of what we have noted. What is clear (the reality) Nisman is dead, but the discussion on the causes and context of that death remain in the shadow. In some sense, we feel Kelman’s theory is incomplete. The conspiracy closed the hermeneutical circle of hegemony, just whenever ideology does not work. If we start from the premise Nisman committed suicide forced by emotional problems, for example depression, if he would leave a parting letter, it would be impossible to apply the conspirational narrative. However, we do not know whether it represents a case of forced-suicide, or he was even killed up to date?.

This gap, loophole, may be filled according to the interests of diverse actors. For the government, Nisman was killed to discredit the presidency months before presidential elections. Rather, other voices claimed Nisman committed suicide because his denounce against president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner was a “fake”. Whatever the case may be, government not only failed to protect Nisman but also appears in the scene as the primary responsible of this tragedy. Although, accusations against Government cannot be empirically tested, it served to forge a plot (an imaginary story) to hide the own inefficiencies. In doing so, the conspiracy allows keeping the society united but at a higher cost. The confrontational tactics cement the politics in order for the elite’s authority to be preserved. Here, a new question arises, what does a person feel whenever Other says his identity is false?. This question, which has been discussed in Matrix SAGA is present in the civil association Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo or “nietos recuperados”, who struggle for recovering the identities of “niños en cautiverio” (kidnapped children).

Since the “nieto recuperado” discovers its own identity, its past, feelings, biography and emotions are destroyed forever for a new garment that has been externally designed. This discourse allows Kirchnerismo opening a gap with two contrasting realities, based in “schizoid-paranoid logic” where dichotimization legitimates the political continuance of what has been the neoliberalism. Paradoxically, Kirchnerismo validates daily what in the bottom it hates.
New interesting insights hinted Kirchnerismo cemented an atmosphere of fear and violence once they realized elections against Macri would result in a political disaster. On 25 October 2015, for the presidency, Macri obtained 34% while Scioli 36% which is not enough to elect a president. This paves the ways for a ballotage by 22 November 2015. In this token, Maria Eugenia Vidal, candidate to Buenos Aires Governor defeats Anibal Fernandez which not only causes a great shock in Frente para la Victoria, but triggers a fear-campaign to dissuade citizens Macri was not a good option for the country, a return to the hell of neoliberalism that led Argentina to the financial collapse in 2001. In other cases, terrorist messages were alerting on the possibility to bomb some targets if Macri is elected as president. This was the example of Quebracho group, a radical cell hosted by Kirchnerismo.

REFERENCES:


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