

A study on the ideological and political education of the Argentine Justicialist Party under Peronism

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Abstract. This study aims to examine in depth the content, impact, and implications of the ideological and political education of the Argentine Justicialist Party under the guidance of Peronism. As a major political force on the Argentine historical stage, the Justicialist Party's ideological and political education has played a critical role in shaping the political loyalty, values, and behavioral norms of its members and the broader populace. This paper first outlines the core ideas and characteristics of the Justicialist Party and Peronism, and then analyzes how these ideas are integrated into the Party's ideological and political education. The study reveals how the Justicialist Party has employed various methods to cultivate a profound understanding of and firm belief in Peronism among its members and the people. In addition, this paper explores the significance and influence of Peronism from a dialectical perspective, thereby prompting reflection and yielding insights. Through this research, we hope to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the far-reaching influence of Peronism in Argentina's political culture. More importantly, the study seeks to incorporate the principles of comparative ideological and political education to draw lessons for contemporary ideological and political education practices.

Keywords: Argentine Justicialist Party, Peronism, comparative ideological and political education

1. Introduction

1.1. An overview of the Justicialist Party

The Argentine Justicialist Party, also known as the Peronist Party, was founded in 1947 by former President Juan Domingo Perón. It has held a pivotal position in Argentina's political history. From its inception, the Justicialist Party has been profoundly influenced by Peronist ideology, committing itself to the promotion of social equity and justice, the protection of labor rights, and the active pursuit of national self-reliant development. Among all political parties in Argentina since the 20th century, the Justicialist Party has been in power the most frequently and for the longest cumulative period. In terms of both duration and frequency of governance, the Justicialist Party is undoubtedly the most influential political force in Argentina over the past century [1]. This paper focuses primarily on the ideological and political education of the Justicialist Party during its 20th-century periods in power, under the influence of Peronism.

Over the course of its decades-long development, the Justicialist Party has produced numerous prominent leaders and figures, the most renowned of whom is Juan Perón himself. As the Party's founder and spiritual leader, Perón laid a solid foundation for the Justicialist Party through his distinctive political charisma and unwavering convictions. Under his leadership, the Party not only garnered broad public support but also established a dominant presence in Argentina's political arena. The founding of the Justicialist Party and its contributions throughout history have undoubtedly left a profound mark on Argentina's political, economic, and social development.

1.2. An overview of Peronism

Peronism, a political ideology that emerged in Argentina during the 1940s, was introduced by then-President Juan Perón and is also referred to as Justicialism. It not only exerted a profound influence on Argentina's political history but also offered the international community a distinctive political perspective.

At its core, Peronism is founded upon the doctrine of the "Third Position." This doctrine advocates for Argentina to maintain a stance of neutrality in the complex dynamics of international relations—aligning neither fully with the United States nor with

the Soviet Union. In other words, it embodies what is commonly known as the “Third Way.” Peronism was one of the first ideologies to openly declare a commitment to this Third Way, and its interpretation of the concept remains among the most systematic and comprehensive [2]. This position reflects Perón’s keen understanding of the global geopolitical landscape of the time, as he sought a path for Argentina that would both safeguard national interests and avoid entanglement in the conflicts of major powers.

Peronism also advanced three principal slogans: “political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice.” These three slogans form the theoretical foundation of Peronist thought. Political sovereignty emphasizes national autonomy and the dignity of the nation; economic independence advocates for the development of a self-sufficient economic system with reduced reliance on external forces; and social justice focuses on fairness and equity within society, aiming to eliminate social inequality.

Another key component is Peronism’s “opposition to sectarianism and pursuit of balance.” Peronism explicitly rejected the dogmatism of both capitalism and communism. Perón believed that both systems harbored forms of exploitation and injustice. Thus, he proposed a political philosophy that stood between the two, striving for a more equitable and balanced social order. In the author’s view, this principle bears a conceptual resemblance to the traditional Chinese doctrine of the “Doctrine of the Mean” (zhōng yōng zhī dào), reflecting a shared emphasis on moderation and balance.

Moreover, the idea of “coordinating and integrating diverse social forces” is another central tenet. Peronism recognizes that society comprises various often-conflicting forces—such as idealism and materialism, individualism and collectivism. In pursuit of social harmony and stability, these forces must be effectively coordinated and integrated. Peronism endeavors to identify a point of equilibrium at which these forces can each play their roles within society without coming into conflict.

1.3. The relationship between the Justicialist Party and Peronism

In discussing the relationship between the Argentine Justicialist Party and Peronism, one must first acknowledge the Party’s alternative name—the Peronist Party. The name Justicialist Party was formally adopted in 1964. The Party was founded by Juan Perón himself, and Peronism is the political ideology proposed by Perón. From the moment of its founding, the Justicialist Party embraced the core principles of Peronism and established them as its guiding doctrine. Even in its recent evolution—for instance, its renaming in 2023 as “Union for the Homeland” (Unión por la Patria)—the Party has continued to reflect the spirit of Peronism in its political stance and platform.

Throughout its periods in power, the political philosophy of the Justicialist Party has consistently embodied Peronist thought. The Party has upheld the three foundational pillars of Peronism: political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice. These principles reflect Peronism’s pursuit of autonomous national development, economic self-reliance, and social equity. In its political practices, the Justicialist Party has continuously emphasized these ideals, striving to protect labor rights, promote social welfare, and advocate for harmonious labor–capital relations.

It is thus evident that the Justicialist Party and Peronism are inseparable—whether in the Party’s historical development, its renaming and transformation, or in its ideological commitments. The Justicialist Party has remained a steadfast practitioner of Peronist ideals, committed to realizing the goals of political sovereignty, economic independence, and social justice.

2. Ideological and political education conducted by the Justicialist Party under Peronism

2.1. Clarifying core values

Through its ideological and political education, the Justicialist Party emphasizes the importance of political sovereignty—one of the core principles of Peronism. The Party educates its members to cherish the country’s political independence and autonomous decision-making power, ensuring that national policies remain free from external manipulation. Such education fosters a strong sense of national consciousness and pride among Party members, enabling them to better defend national interests and uphold the dignity of the nation.

In its ideological education, the Justicialist Party also places importance on cultivating recognition of economic independence among both Party members and the general populace. The Party stresses that the nation must maintain control over its economic lifelines and reduce dependency on external economies in order to achieve sustained and healthy development. This principle inspires a sense of economic self-reliance among Party members and contributes to advancing national economic autonomy.

Social justice, another core tenet of Peronism, is likewise a central focus of the Justicialist Party’s ideological and political education. The Party educates and guides the public to pay attention to social equity and justice, advocating for an equal and fair social order. This educational effort helps to instill a sense of social responsibility in Party members, motivating them to actively engage in the pursuit of social fairness and justice.

The clarification of these core values forms the very foundation of the Justicialist Party’s ideological and political education under Peronism, and serves as the basis for the Party’s broader political activities. It is through this value-based education that public awareness of Peronist ideology is cultivated. Cultivating loyalty to ideology is essential, as leadership policies are

designed to align with ideological commitments [3]. These clearly articulated values have not only guided the Argentine people over the past half-century in their struggle for independence and national prosperity, but they also continue to serve as a compass for the ruling party in exploring new paths of national development in the future.

2.2. Establishing strong appeal

Whenever Argentina faces crises or turmoil, moments when a strong governing party is needed to steer the country out of difficulties, the Justicialist Party often becomes the preferred choice of the electorate. The Party's sustained high level of popular support is closely linked to its unique capacity for appeal and attraction. This appeal, in turn, serves as one of the key foundations supporting its ideological and political education under Peronism.

This strength stems from the charismatic leadership of successive Justicialist Party leaders, especially the Party's founder Juan Perón and his wife Eva Perón. As an outstanding political activist, Perón understood the importance of cultivating a public image. He was adept at displaying his distinctive personal charisma in public, using passionate and often stirring rhetoric combined with approachable behavior to bridge the gap between himself and ordinary people. Although Eva Perón did not hold political office, she actively engaged in political activities among the populace, promoting the advantages of Peronism. Moreover, she participated extensively in social service activities, delivering practical benefits to the people, thereby amassing considerable popular appeal. Other Justicialist leaders, such as Menem and Kirchner, while not possessing the same level of influence as Perón, also secured their appeal through their own remarkable personal governing charisma.

Building on this emphasis on cultivating appeal, the Justicialist Party integrates the systematic Peronist ideological framework mentioned earlier into speeches, events, and educational programs to carry out ideological and political work among the public.

2.3. Employing diversified educational methods

To enhance the effectiveness of ideological and political education under Peronism, the Justicialist Party adopts diversified educational approaches.

Firstly, it combines theoretical education with practical training. After Perón came to power, he actively expanded union membership and assisted in establishing the General Confederation of Labour. During this process, he not only taught the working class the Peronist theory—that is, the “Third Position” ideology situated between capitalism and socialism—but also put this theory into practice through concrete actions such as raising workers' wages and improving working conditions. During the Justicialist Party's governance, systematic classroom instruction was used to impart Peronism's theoretical system and core values to Party members, ensuring they gained a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the Party's guiding ideology. Moreover, the major concepts of Peronism were integrated into the national education curriculum, embedding these ideas within public classrooms. Building on classroom teaching, the Party organized members to participate in social practice activities—such as community service and social research—so that they could deepen their understanding of Peronism through practice and learn to apply theory in real-world contexts. The Justicialist Party also emphasized practical activities among the masses, establishing labor associations and maintaining active contact with existing labor organizations. Shortly after its founding, the Party proactively developed corporatist and sponsorship relations with Argentine labor groups, frequently using nationalist rhetoric among elites to promote the development of a nationalist political ecology [4]. This exemplifies the Justicialist Party's practical engagement with the broader population.

Secondly, traditional culture is incorporated into ideological and political education. Through lectures and exhibitions on traditional culture, Party members are guided to understand and appreciate their national cultural heritage, thereby enhancing their national pride and cultural confidence.

Finally, the Party leverages the power of role models and self-education. Outstanding Party members or societal exemplars are invited to share their experiences and insights, inspiring and motivating other members through their concrete actions and successes. The central figure in this method was Juan Perón himself, who, during his tenure, frequently conducted nationwide speeches, establishing a model-centered education concept that countless people embraced. Regarding self-education, the Justicialist Party encourages members to engage in self-reflection and self-education by writing diaries and reflection reports, continuously examining their own behaviors and thoughts to achieve personal growth.

3. Evaluation and perception

The significant historical status of Peronism is undoubtedly due to its ideological doctrine aligning with the developmental trends of Argentina's historical trajectory. This theory has exerted a profound influence on Argentina's historical development. At the same time, when evaluating the effects and impact of the ideological and political education conducted by the Justicialist Party under Peronism, it is necessary to adopt a dialectical perspective.

3.1. Positive significance

First, it strengthens awareness of national sovereignty. Peronism emphasizes political sovereignty, and the implementation of this principle in ideological and political education helps enhance the public's sense of national consciousness and sovereignty. Through education, people come to cherish the nation's independence and autonomy, thereby fostering a unified national identity and patriotic spirit.

Second, it promotes social justice and equality. Peronism advocates social justice, and applying this principle in ideological and political education can guide people to focus on social fairness and justice, opposing exploitation and inequality. This education cultivates a sense of justice and empathy among the populace, contributing to social harmony and stability.

Third, it stimulates the spirit of economic independence. Peronism's adherence to the policy of "economic independence" paved the way for the development of Argentina's national economy, laying the foundation for the country's eventual liberation from imperialist political and economic control and mastery over its own destiny [5]. The dissemination of this economic independence concept through ideological and political education inspires people to pursue economic autonomy and development. This fosters a spirit of self-reliance among the populace and promotes the nation's economic independence and prosperity.

Finally, it cultivates an international perspective. Peronism advocates maintaining an "equidistant" stance between imperialism and communism, supports the Third World, and seeks to free itself from dependence on superpowers. The integration of this international vision into ideological and political education helps develop the public's global awareness and sense of international responsibility, encouraging the nation to play a more active role in international affairs.

3.2. Negative implications

The ideological and political education carried out by the Justicialist Party under Peronism has also produced certain negative effects.

Foremost among these is the emergence of personality cults, which in turn contributed to a low degree of democratization. Perón was an authoritarian leader whose decisions were synonymous with the Party's decisions. Only staunch and loyal Peronists could serve as officials within the Perón government, regardless of their actual abilities. The Justicialist Party's 1947 constitution stipulated that Perón had the authority to revise any Party decisions and to review the eligibility of all candidates. This meant that the Party was subordinated solely to Perón's leadership rather than to collective governance. Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, the Party's emphasis on cultivating appeal also expanded into a personal cult of leadership surrounding figures such as Perón and Menem. The extreme concentration of decision-making power in the leader, combined with excessive adulation and glorification, fostered an autocratic, patriarchal leadership style. This not only led to a regression in intra-party democratization but also bred corruption.

Additionally, there are inherent flaws within Peronist theory itself. The "Third Position" doctrine emphasized by Peronism resulted in the Party's ideological and political education placing excessive emphasis on this middle path, which limited the public's understanding and exploration of diverse political viewpoints and ideologies. This may have rigidified public thinking, making it difficult to encounter and accept pluralistic perspectives.

Furthermore, the Party's education often neglected individual differences. Although Peronism reflects the aspirations of the working class and the national bourgeoisie to some extent, it cannot encompass the needs and interests of all individuals. Overemphasizing Peronist ideology in the Party's education may overlook the diversity and individuality of the populace, leading to unfairness and ineffectiveness in education.

Finally, there is a lack of critical thinking. Unlike the dialectical and critical thinking characteristic of Marxism, ideological and political education within the framework of Peronism tends to overemphasize acceptance and compliance with the existing system, while neglecting critical reflection on that system. This suppresses critical thinking and innovation among Party members and the public, hindering their ability to think and judge independently.

These negative effects have accumulated over time, leading both Party insiders and the public to increasingly recognize the limitations of Peronism in the 21st century. Consequently, the Justicialist Party has gradually withdrawn from its dominant position in Argentina's political arena and currently functions as an opposition party.

4. Insights and implications

After analyzing the content of Peronism and conducting a critical evaluation, it is necessary to return to the methodology of comparative ideological and political education. Through the analysis of Peronist ideological and political education, we can draw insights and lessons from its strengths and weaknesses. These reflections can then be applied to the development of ideological and political education in our own country, with the aim of promoting the improvement and strengthening of practical ideological and political education work.

4.1. Ideological and political education as a key focus in party building

Today's world is characterized by party politics, and the construction of political parties is an indispensable element within this system. In the process of party building, ideological and political education has played a crucial role in advancing the ideological, political, organizational, and work-style development of the Argentine Justicialist Party.

Regarding the Justicialist Party, due to the generally high level of loyalty of its members to the Party organization, Justicialist Party members—often acting in a parental role—consciously guide their children to engage with Peronism in daily life [6]. This outcome reflects the Party's emphasis on ideological and political education in its party-building efforts.

Drawing from the development of the Argentine Justicialist Party, we must also emphasize the central role of ideological and political education in party building. In the course of our country's development, it is essential to further strengthen the core position of ideological and political education within party building, enhance political and ideological construction capabilities, and ensure that Party members and cadres firmly establish the lofty ideals of communism and the shared ideals of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Moreover, it is necessary to improve the work capabilities and service awareness of Party members and cadres. Special attention should be given to the cultivation of young Party members. Through ideological and political education, the Justicialist Party has nurtured outstanding leaders for the Party. For our country, it is important to intensify the training of young Party members and cadres by means of systematic ideological and political education and strengthened organizational construction, cultivating them into loyal, dedicated, and responsible cadres fit for the new era.

4.2. Diversifying methods of ideological and political education

As mentioned earlier, the ideological and political education of the Justicialist Party is characterized by its diversified methods, which have effectively ingrained Peronism deeply among the people.

First, it is essential to leverage new media to broaden educational channels. With the development of information technology, new media has become a crucial tool for disseminating information and guiding public opinion. The Argentine Justicialist Party has utilized media for propaganda and education purposes. For our country, platforms such as Weibo, WeChat, and Douyin can be employed to conduct a variety of ideological and political education activities, expanding educational outreach and enabling more people to receive education.

Second, the Justicialist Party emphasizes integrating ideological and political education with practical work, deepening Party members' understanding of Party theory and policies through practice. We can also strengthen practical education by organizing students to participate in social practice activities, such as volunteer service and social surveys, enabling them to experience social responsibility and commitment firsthand and thereby enhance the experiential dimension of ideological and political education.

4.3. Ideological and political education must align with contemporary context and practical needs

The Argentine Justicialist Party neglected to ensure that its ideological and political education aligned sufficiently with the demands of the era and the realities on the ground. This oversight is among the reasons why, despite Peronism's continued influence in Argentina today, the Justicialist Party ultimately retreated from the historical stage.

During its governance, the Justicialist Party experienced policy failures, partly because its ideological and political education failed to adequately adapt to the contemporary context and practical needs. For example, during Perón's second presidential term, inflation soared above 30 percent, and economic problems surfaced—reflecting a disconnect between ideological education and effective economic policymaking and adjustment. For our country, this implies that ideological and political education must not remain confined to theoretical discussions but should be closely integrated with the actual circumstances of national development. It should guide practice and ensure the rationality and effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation.

5. Conclusion

This study has conducted an in-depth exploration of the ideological and political education practices of the Argentine Justicialist Party under the guidance of Peronism and their impact. Based on this, it incorporates comparative ideological and political education methods learned in coursework, relating the findings to the context of ideological and political education in our own country for analysis, thereby deriving insights and inspirations on how to advance the development of ideological and political education domestically.

In summary, the ideological and political education practice of the Argentine Justicialist Party under Peronism provides a valuable case study demonstrating how a political philosophy can be effectively integrated into ideological and political education to shape and consolidate the political beliefs and loyalty of Party members and the general public. This research is not

only significant for understanding Argentina's political development but also offers useful references and lessons for our country's ideological and political education.

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