

Democracy and Dictatorship in Argentina:  
Juan Domingo Perón and his influence in Argentina's Government  
By: Katy Freiburger  
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Argentina has went through many changes throughout history and has also had many influential leaders. Argentina's main influential leader was Juan Domingo Perón who is the main inspiration of the Perónist Party. Harry Vanden and Gary Prevost who wrote *Politics of Latin American: The Power Game* briefly talk about Perón's life and involvement in Argentina's political history. Much more can be said about Perón's life and involvement in Argentina, which includes Perón's background, Perón's first presidency, Perón's wife Eva's involvement in his presidency, relationship with the United States, and finally Perón's second presidency and second wife.

Vanden and Prevost failed to mention the background of Perón, which is critical to his political views. When Perón was only 16 he enrolled into the Military College and graduated Second Lieutenant of Infantry ("Juan Domingo Perón"). This was just the start of Perón's military involvement. He later went on to become the private secretary of Minister of War for five years ("Juan Domingo Perón"). Perón involvement in the military was not only physical, he also published five books on military history ("Juan Domingo Perón"). Perón was later involved in overthrowing the government of Romon Castillo. Perón's popularity grow and grow from that point, he was soon appointed the position of Secretary of Work and Social Well-Fare and then later on was appointed Vice President and War Minister ("Juan Domingo Perón"). These are all key points that Vanden and Prevost failed to mention. Every political and military involvement Perón had set the stage for his later success as president.

In 1946, Juan Perón ran for president with the help of his wife Eva Durate de Perón. Vanden and Prevost just mentions a little about Juan Perón's first presidency. One main point Vanden and Prevost mentions is the impact Perón had on Argentina's political parties. Perónism, which is the name given to Perón's party is the largest political party in Argentina. Vanden and Prevost failed to mention what his party stood for, which was strongly nationalistic, anti-imperialist and anti-United States ("Early Career and First Presidency"). His party was mainly based on rapid growth in the industrialization and making the economy self-sufficient ("Early Career and First Presidency"). Perón's goal in making the country economical self-sufficient may have looked good to the people of Argentina, but that view only lasted a short time. The economy eventually started to suffer and Perón was blamed for many of the mistakes in the economy. He was later forced out of the country by the military. Even though he was thrown out of the country, he still remained popular. During his presidency he was not the only person to become popular, his wife Eva became very popular with the working class.

Eva's involvement with the working class reflected on Juan's presidency. She was actively involved in social aid programs, that were meant to help the working class of Argentina. During Juan's presidency she created the Social Aid Foundation, where she would hand out charities personally (Chasteen 254). Eva's achievements did not end there, she also won women in Argentina the right to vote in 1947 (Chasteen 254). Eva's was involved also in equalizing work and pay for women in Argentina (Chasteen 254). Vanden and Prevost failed to mention any of Eva's achievement during Juan Perón's presidency. Eva was just as much influential in Argentina's history as Juan was and was greatly missed upon her death during Juan's presidency.

Perón's relationship with the United States was not mentioned at all by Vanden and Prevost. Perón's relationship with the United States reflected the ideas of his political party the Perónist. He dislike the United States involvement in world affairs and their involvement in war trade. United States did not support the Perónist party because they were based on European fascist and communism (Dorn 3). Perón did not argue on many of the same issues as the United States, so this put a major boundary between the two countries. Perón stated this "We are not anit-American, but we do not desire to march to the beat of foreign drums" (Dorn 3). This statement not only talks about the United States, he also refers to the rest of the world. Perón wanted to have a self-sufficient country, so this affected his image the rest of the world had on him. The imagine the rest of the world had on Perón, did not affect the image and popularity he had in Argentina. This helped Perón become president for the second time in Argentina.

Perón's second presidency is briefly mentioned in Vanden and Prevost. One must asks, how Perón was allowed back into the country after being exiled during his first presidency? He was first invited into the country by the Military Government, in 1973. By October of 1973 he was re-elected president of Argentina. ("Juan Domingo Perón"). Perón's new wife Isabel de Perón or often called Maria Estela Martínez de Perón, became his vice president. Perón's second presidency was short lived, since he died less than a year after his election. His wife Isabel then became the first women president in Argentina and Latin America. She reigned as president for nearly three years before being overthrown by the military ("Juan Domingo Peron"). During her time as president the country began to "fall apart". She was not able to get support from any organized labor group("Second Presidency"). Guerilla warfare and political terrorism began to rise

tremendously, so the military then intervened (“Second Presidency”). After Isabel was removed from president, the government took control and there soon was one of the bloodiest regimes in South American history in Argentina (“Second Presidency”).

Much was to be said about Juan Domingo Perón and his involvement in Argentina’s political and social history. Vanden and Prevost only gave a brief summary of Juan Perón in Argentina, but they did a good job in presenting the information. I felt that more should have been said about Juan Perón and his life. Perón’s wives were also a major part of his political career and they were just briefly mentioned in the section. Eva the most influential of Perón’s wives played a major role in Argentina’s history and I feel she could have had her a little more recognition for her achievements. She was a very influential woman for other women and the poor working class. Perón’s relationship with the United States was a clear indicator of his political power and his political party’s ideas. Lastly, Perón’s second presidency may have only been short lived, but it showed that he was very popular and very well liked by the people of Argentina. Juan Domingo Perón still lives in Argentina through his political influences and he should not be forgotten.

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