

A Flat Circle? Recurrences and Differences in Memories of the Last Dictatorship during the Rise of Argentina's Radical Right*

¿Un círculo plano? Recurrencias y diferencias en los sentidos sobre la última dictadura ante el ascenso de la derecha radical en Argentina

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Recibido: 24 de marzo de 2025 - Aceptado: 6 de agosto de 2025

* Research for this article was carried out as part of PICT Serie A 2020 00470 research project "Reconfiguraciones y nuevas emergencias memoriales sobre el pasado reciente: disputas, narrativas, actores y políticas durante los años de ascenso de la derecha en Argentina (2008 -2019)" ["Reconfigurations and the Construction of New Memories of the Recent Past: Disputes, Narratives, Actors and Policies During the Years of the Rising Right in Argentina (2008 -2019)"], directed by Valentina Salvi based at CIS-CONICET/IDES-UNTREF.

CÓMO CITAR ESTE ARTÍCULO /CITATION

Valentina Salvi & Matías Grinchpun, “A Flat Circle? Recurrences and Differences in Memories of the Last Dictatorship during the Rise of Argentina’s Radical Right”, *Hispania Nova*, Numero extraordinario 2026: 23-44.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20318/hn.2026.9424>

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Abstract

Javier Milei’s victory in the 2023 presidential election challenged the established consensus that had prevailed since the democratic transition in several ways, for example by officialising what until then had been a counter-memory of the last military dictatorship. This paper takes as a starting point a set of meanings of terms reclaimed by the libertarian discursive formation to refer to the 1970s, such as “war”, “terrorism”, “there were not 30,000” and “*curro* (theft) of human rights”, and aims to rebuild the layers of meaning that overlap in this configuration of memory by considering its historical lineage. On the one hand, following Foucauldian notions of origin and emergence, it analyses the course of historical and political events which contributed a plexus of meanings from the years before the coup up to the present. On the other hand, it examines the growing tensions and disagreements that contributed to the pervasiveness, dissemination or obliteration of such meanings in the public debate.

Keywords

Right, Argentina, Milei, Memory, Dictatorship.

Resumen

El triunfo de Javier Milei en las elecciones presidenciales de 2023 trasvasó los consensos establecidos desde la transición democrática de varias maneras, al oficializar, por ejemplo, lo que hasta entonces era una contramemoria de la última dictadura militar. Esta intervención se apoya en un conjunto de sentidos y representaciones que son evocados por la formación discursiva libertaria para referirse a los años setenta: “guerra”, “terrorismo”, “no fueron 30 000” y “*curro* (robo) de los derechos humanos”. El artículo parte de esta coyuntura para reconstruir genealógicamente las capas de sentido que se manifiestan plegadas en esta configuración memorial. Siguiendo las nociones foucaultianas de procedencia y emergencia, se analiza, por una parte, el devenir de los acontecimientos histórico-políticos que desde los años anteriores al golpe de Estado hasta la actualidad han contribuido a la inscripción de un plexo de significaciones; y, por otra, el desarrollo de las tensiones y disputas que han colaborado en su pregnancia, disipación u obliteración en el debate público.

Palabras clave

Derechas, Argentina, Milei, Memoria, Dictadura.

Don't you see they are all communists?¹
Gen. Luciano Benjamín Menéndez
(*La Nación*, January 18, 1984)

Introduction. Disbandment and Persistence

On the eve of the 50th anniversary of its last coup d'état in March 1976, Argentina is facing an unprecedented situation. For the first time since the restoration of democracy in December 1983, the Executive Power lies in the hands of a political force that in many ways shares affinities with the *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* [National Reorganisation Process]. Its legacy, marked by the deployment of a clandestine and illegal repressive plan, has become one of the tools that *La Libertad Avanza* (LLA), a far-right political party,² has used to antagonise its opponents and rally its ranks. While the more moderate *Propuesta Republicana* (PRO) had questioned the prevailing meanings of terms referring to the dictatorial past during Mauricio Macri's presidency (2015-19), Javier Milei directly inverted them.

The far-right government did not find a barren field but instead benefited from residual memories that reiterated pro-Process arguments and took long-standing conservative and reactionary perspectives. It was also nourished from the emergent discursive formations that stood in contrast with the views of human rights organisations, including those enshrined in the *Informe Nunca Más* [Never Again Report] and the sentence of the *Juicio a las Juntas Militares* [Military Juntas' Trial].³ In this regard, the career of Vice-President Victoria Villarruel is illustrative, since her main political background

1. Original version: "¿No ven que todos son comunistas?"

2. "Right" is understood as a set of actors, discourses and practices that establish a relationship of opposition and complementarity with another, called "left". Their content varies according to their chronological and temporal framework, but they tend to ascribe to order, hierarchy, and tradition (Bobbio, 2014). The radical sectors are those that, unlike the extremes, participate in the elections and the party system, although they share clichés, rhetoric and narratives that may question the established agreements. See Cas Mudde, *La ultraderecha hoy* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2021).

3. The categories of "residual" and "emergent" are taken from Raymond Williams, *Marxismo y literatura* (Buenos Aires: Las Cuarenta, 2009), 167-171.

had been to lead the *Centro de Estudios sobre el Terrorismo y sus Víctimas* (CELTYV, Centre for Studies on Terrorism and its Victims). Villarruel held this position when Milei summoned her as a running mate in 2021, resulting in a rapprochement with the defenders of those convicted of crimes against humanity.⁴ At the same time, conservative and libertarian activism, both from the streets and online, flooded social discourse with slogans and figures that justified, trivialised and/or denied State terrorism.⁵ Using books and memes, they pushed the limits of what could be said about the past. This led to the revival of diatribes against entities such as *Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* [Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo] and *HIJOS* [SONS], who were accused of corruption and were personally discredited, tarnishing their moral authority and social standing in a context of noticeable polarisation caused by Néstor and Cristina Kirchner's policies. In this way, a connection opened up between supporters of Propuesta Republicana (PRO) and voters for Milei and Villarruel.⁶

Even though the debate about the recent past was part of anti-Kirchnerism and a broader "anti-progressivism," it has not carried the same weight for all LLA's factions. For the libertarian and anarcho-capitalist sectors closest to Milei, memories of the 70s have not been the founding *ethos* of their political identity. This is not the case, however, for conservative and Catholic groups, closer to Villarruel or to intellectuals such as Agustín Laje and Nicolás Márquez. Nevertheless, the LLA presidential candidate made public his stance on the dictatorial past at the debate prior to the 2023 presidential election:

We value the vision of memory, truth and justice. Let's start with the truth. 8,753 people went disappeared, not 30,000. (...) We are against the one-sided vision of history. In the 70s there was a war. In that war the forces of the State committed excesses. As they had the monopoly on violence, they deserve the full weight of the law. But Montoneros' and ERP's terrorists also killed people, murdered people, tortured people, planted bombs and committed crimes against humanity too. We do not agree with the *curros* (theft) of human rights either (...).⁷⁸

4. In 2006, Villarruel founded CELTYV, an NGO dedicated to demanding recognition for those killed by political and military organisations during the 1970s as part of the set of "complete memory" groups. Cristián Palmisciano, *El tiempo de los otros. Memorias y nuevas derechas, un análisis a partir de la carrera militante de Victoria Villarruel*, *Clepsidra*, n.º 9:17 (2022), 54-69.

5. The category "State terrorism" refers to the illegal and clandestine repressive campaign during the dictatorship (1976-1983) based on kidnapping, captivity, systematic torture and forced disappearance of people, whose remains were not returned to their families. It is a notion native to human rights organisations and widely circulated and formalised in the Academia in Argentina.

6. Sergio Morresi and Martín Vicente. 2023. *Rayos en cielo encapotado: la nueva derecha como una constante irregular en la Argentina*. In *Está entre nosotros. ¿De dónde sale y hasta dónde puede llegar la extrema derecha que no vimos venir?*, ed. by Pablo Semán, 73-77. Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI. Led at the beginning by Macri, the PRO deployed an anti-populist discourse that combined criticism of "squandering", concern for institutional quality and fear of a "Chavista axis."

7. Speech on bit.ly/4ev3d3Y.

8. Original: "Valoramos la visión de memoria, verdad y justicia. Empecemos por la verdad. No fueron 30 000 los desaparecidos, son 8 753. (...) Estamos en contra de la visión tuerta de la historia. Durante los 70 hubo una guerra. En esa guerra las fuerzas del Estado cometieron excesos, por tener el monopolio de la violencia le vale todo el peso de la ley, pero también los terroristas de Montoneros y los terroristas del

This declaration brings together the main meanings and representations recalled by the libertarian discursive formation to make reference to the 70s: “war”, “terrorism”, “there were not 30,000” and “*curro* (theft) of human rights”. These terms and phrases were pieces of the arsenal deployed in the so-called “cultural battle”.⁹ In each expression, past and present are bent in a particular way, representing continuities and discontinuities that must be addressed considering their historical lineage. Following Foucault’s notions of origin and emergence,¹⁰ on the one hand this paper intends to analyse the course of historical and political events that contributed to a plexus of meanings from the years before the coup up to the present day. On the other hand, it examines the growing tensions and disagreements that contributed to the pervasiveness, dissemination or obliteration of such meanings in the public debate. In other words, it is not a matter of “tracing the slow curve of an evolution, but of recognising the different scenes in which different roles have been played; of defining even the point of their absence, the moment in which they have not happened”,¹¹ to understand their reductions, transformations and omissions over more than half a century.

Academic studies devoted to this subject are still forthcoming. A host of work has focused on the different processes that preceded the rise of the far right, and they show the transformations that have strained the memorial landscape in recent decades. For example, the military narratives and the emergence of the slogan “complete memory”,¹² the activism of the sons and daughters of convicted repressors¹³, the “revisionist”-style productions¹⁴ and the device of “dialogue” as a way of managing the recent past.¹⁵ Other approaches have addressed the progressive interweaving of these phenomena, practices and discourses, impacting the reconfiguration of social memories,¹⁶ and the shift in

ERP mataron gente, asesinaron gente, torturaron gente, pusieron bombas y también cometieron delitos de lesa humanidad. Tampoco estamos de acuerdo con los curros de los derechos humanos (...)”.

9. Inspired by Plinio Corrêa da Oliveira and the reinterpretation of Antonio Gramsci by the *Nouvelle Droite*, the phrase “cultural battle” privileges the struggle in the ideological field—which is considered hegemonic by the left—as a previous step to the conquest of political power.

10. Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, la genealogía y la historia* (Buenos Aires: Pre-textos, 2004).

11. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

12. Valentina Salvi, *De vencedores a víctimas. Memorias militares sobre el pasado reciente en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2012).

13. Analía Goldentul, “Doblegar la bronca y aprender”. Activismo de la agrupación Hijos y Nietos de Presos Políticos en un entramado político-cultural de los derechos humanos en disputa (2008–2017), PhD Thesis, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2021

14. Campos, Esteban. 2021. Las historias sobre Montoneros, entre el revisionismo conservador y el progresismo intelectual, *Contenciosa*. bit.ly/49DBJIw; and Grinchpun, Matías. 2024. Como solo el Tata puede contarlo. Una aproximación historiográfica a los libros de Juan B. Yofre. *Políticas de la Memoria* 24: 92-102. bit.ly/4gEiGk5.

15. Saferstein, Ezequiel and Analía Goldentul. 2019. El “diálogo” como discurso emergente. La articulación de un espacio de ideas en torno a la memoria del pasado reciente en Argentina (2008-2018). *Políticas de la Memoria*, 19: 15-30. bit.ly/4gAqB1f; and Salvi, Valentina. 2023. El dispositivo dialógico. Límites de lo decible en las disputas memoriales en Argentina. *Secuencia*, 117: 1-29. bit.ly/3VAr9wb.

16. Lvovich, Daniel and Matías Grinchpun. 2022. Banalización, relativización, negacionismo. Un escenario en los campos de batalla por la memoria del pasado argentino reciente. *Contenciosa*. bit.ly/3OSTdXX; and Salvi, Valentina and Luciana Messina. 2024. Reconfiguraciones memoriales sobre el terrorismo de

human rights policies during Macri's government (2015-19).¹⁷ Lately, the validity of the *pacto* (deal) forged around the slogan *Nunca más* [Never Again] has been reevaluated in light of the rising libertarianism.¹⁸ Our proposal is to award historical depth to LLA's memorial initiatives to immerse ourselves in a broader historical lineage that traces its roots back to the years before the coup d'état and, along with its twists and turns, spans almost five decades up to the present day.

To this effect, this paper is based on the mobility of meanings of terms of the Argentine's 70s appearing in the public statements of libertarian leaders since the 2023 electoral campaign and in their initiatives during their first year of government. By extension, appearances in the media, on social networks and in public events have been selected, as have written and audiovisual official documents. These topics will be analysed diachronically, starting with the military memoirs on the "*lucha contra la subversión*" ["fight against subversion"], based on previous research and publications on the subject.¹⁹ The 'flat circle' metaphor, chosen for the title, is a symbol of eternal recurrence of history, of everlasting return. One might think then that conservative, dictatorial and reactionary visions return as part of a cycle, but as we will show here, if something returns, it never does so unchanged.

On War. Military exceptionalism as a grammar of meaning

In Milei's aforementioned speech, the far right's self-representation in the memorial landscape can be traced: they are bearers of a supposedly denied truth. They participate in the public debate questioning or denouncing the narratives they reject as self-serving, fallacious and biased. Villarruel did the same when, in September 2023, she presided over an event in the *Legislatura* [Legislative Power] of the City of Buenos Aires to mark the International Day of the Victims of Terrorism, where she used terms such as "complete memory" to object to "40 years of amputated vision of our history".²⁰ As we shall see, the LLA's rhetoric on the violence of the 70s covers at least three elements: it frames its action as an ideological struggle starting from "us" versus "them;" it lays out

Estado durante los años de ascenso de las derechas en Argentina (2008 -2019). *Política y Sociedad* 61(1): 1-15. bit.ly/4gbhzrR.

17. Balé, Cinthia. 2023. Dimensiones, actores y sentidos del posicionamiento de Cambiemos frente al pasado reciente en la Argentina (2015-2019). *Estudios Sociales del Estado* 9(18): 30-57. bit.ly/4ggOkUw; Barros, Mercedes. 2017b. Cambiemos pasado por futuro: los derechos humanos bajo el gobierno de Mauricio Macri. In *Tensiones en la democracia argentina: Rupturas y continuidades en torno al neoliberalismo*, edited by María Teresa Piñero and María Susana Bonetto, 47-64. Córdoba: Centro de Estudios Avanzados.

18. Franco, Marina. 2024. El final del "pacto del Nunca Más", nuestro mito contemporáneo. In *Desquiciados. Los vertiginosos cambios que impulsa la extrema derecha*, coordinated by Alejandro Grimson, 211-231. Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI. Strictly speaking, "libertarianism" is understood here as "paleo-libertarianism" in the vein of Murray Rothbard.

19. This paper is based on two long-term research projects. The first one looked into military memories from the dictatorship to 2012 based on extensive fieldwork carried out between 2003 and 2012 with retired and active officers of the Argentinian Army, their families and the "complete memory" groups that consisted of interviews, participant observations and analysis of secondary sources reflected in Salvi, *De vencedores a víctimas*. The second project focused on the historiographical critique of the "revisionist" literature of the 70s based on their works, as well as interviews with authors, editors and readers.

20. Full speech on bit.ly/40hA3kJ.

a set of grievances that together form a victim *ethos*, and it develops an aggressive discourse from a supposedly defensive stance²¹.

But what 'truth' is it? To begin with, it is maintained, in line with the dictatorial discourse, that a war took place. The repression that unfolded before and after the coup is framed in a military confrontation in such a way that perpetrators become combatants who committed "excesses." If "there was a war," as Milei asserted, there was no State terrorism. Such an argument overshadows the planned, masked and criminal dimension of the disappearance plan, as well as the proven inferiority of the guerrilla's personnel, training and weaponry, reflected in their lack of territorial control.²²

The terminology of counterinsurgency warfare has its roots in the Cold War, during which the United States and its allies feared a Soviet advance into the "Western hemisphere" through cultural, diplomatic, and political "infiltration." The notion of counterrevolutionary struggle resulting from French and American inputs, circulated from the late 1950s among the Armed Forces, where it found a path paved by decades of anti-communism.²³ By operating covertly in their own territory, civilians became potential "subversives," so kidnapping, torture, and murder were justified. These concepts did not remain in the barracks but spread throughout society and gathered acceptance among political leadership, trade unions, businessmen, the Church and the middle classes.²⁴ In other words, the military believed -and made believe- they were facing an "extremist threat" that had to be countered with equally "extraordinary" methods. These guidelines were not established during the dictatorship but preceded it and were one of the conditions for its existence. The theological-political notion of "just war"²⁵ was both the justification and the interpretative framework of the repressive mission: while the Argentinians were self-sacrificing, brave and honest, the "subversives" were vile and perfidious. These virtues inserted the troops within a long line of patriots who had fought for independence, turning repression into a heroic deed.

By 1977, reports of disappeared people and murders had grown to such an extent that Jorge Rafael Videla broke his silence to test the "excesses" strategy that Milei echoed. During a bilateral meeting with James Carter, for example, the *de facto* president stated that "filth" had been "produced in a crackdown" that was "difficult to control" and that "when identified, those responsible" would be punished.^{26,27} This manoeuvre

21. Bebout, Lee. 2020. Weaponizing victimhood: Discourses of oppression and the maintenance of supremacy on the right. In *News on the Right: Studying Conservative News Cultures*, Anthony Nadler and A.J. Bauer (pp. 64-83). Oxford, Oxford University Press.

22. Confino, Hernán and Rodrigo González Tizón, *Anatomía de una mentira. Quiénes y por qué justifican la represión de los setenta* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2024), pp. 58-59.

23. Ernesto Bohoslavsky and Marina Franco, *Fantasmas rojos. El anticomunismo en la Argentina del siglo xx* (San Martín: UNSAM EDITA, 2024).

24. Franco, Marina. *Un enemigo para la nación. Orden interno, nación y "subversión", 1973-1976* (Buenos Aires, Fondo de Cultura Económica: 2012).

25. Rubén Dri, *La hegemonía de los cruzados. La Iglesia católica y la dictadura militar* (Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2011), pp. 91-119.

26. *La Nación*, 9/09/77.

27. Original: "se habían '...producido suciedades (en) una acción represiva dispersa', que eran de 'difícil control' y que serían castigados 'los responsables cuando sean individualizados'."

was based on the representation of the dictator as a counterweight to those sectors that were harder to convince, as well as on Article 514 of the Code of Military Justice in force at the time. According to the latter, nobody other than the superior was responsible for any improper conduct, unless the subordinate exceeded their authority in carrying out a task.²⁸ With this figure, the “Process” veiled the planning and extension of its crimes and limited responsibility to some cases beyond its control given their circumstantial nature. Paradoxically, the “excesses” made it possible for the military to name the unnameable. The “just war” became a “dirty war.”

Towards the end of the dictatorship, the *Documento Final de la Junta Militar sobre la Guerra contra la Subversión y el Terrorismo* [Military Junta’s Final Document on the War against Subversion and Terrorism] insisted that what had been done should not be revised because it had happened during a “defensive war.”²⁹ There were therefore no crimes but “acts of service,” “abuse of authority” and “errors” caused by the “unprecedented procedures” that the enemy had imposed, and so they would be judged exclusively in military headquarters.³⁰ In other words, after the self-amnesty which came with the enactment of the *Ley de Pacificación Nacional* [National Pacification Act] at the end of 1983, the Armed Forces left power proud of having defeated the guerrilla and played or directly denied any disappearances.

The thesis of “excesses” also permeated the policy for the judgment of President Raúl Alfonsín, who distinguished three levels of responsibility: those who gave the orders, those who complied with them and those who “acted in a cruel and perverse way.” Amongst the former he included the first three Military Juntas and, amongst the latter, those who exceptionally committed “atrocious and aberrant crimes,” so they would be excluded from the principle of due obedience.³¹

Conversely, human rights organisations, which were demanding the knowledge of what had happened, put a strain on these discourses by emphasising the categories of “repression” and “disappeared people.” But the perpetrators’ reply came quickly, so a “war of stories” started.³² Meanwhile, the national government, hand in hand with the legislative power, the judiciary and the state apparatus, created its own narrative, in accordance with its aspiration to relaunch the political system, leaving behind both the violence of the political and military organisations and the military repression. Both were “irritating” although it was believed that the second one had been quantitatively and qualitatively worse. This symbolic excommunication was unbearable for those in uniform who, with

28. The concept was vocally rejected by middle cadres, for whom it was a capitulation to the pressures of “Marxism” and a betrayal of those who had fought, who would have to be “held accountable” instead of their superiors.

29. The Final Document was broadcast by Cadena Nacional on 28th April 1983 at 8pm. Available at bit.ly/3Wdp4Xj.

30. On 23rd September 1983, the Military Junta sanctioned the National Pacification Act (Self-Amnesty), repealed in December of the same year by the National Congress at the request of the Executive Power.

31. Carlos Nino, *Juicio al mal absoluto. Los fundamentos y la historia del juicio a las juntas del Proceso* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1997), p. 117.

32. Franco, Marina. *El final del silencio. Dictadura, sociedad y derechos humanos en la transición (Argentina, 1979-1983)* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2018), p. 344.

the “war against subversion,” sought to make up the difference with the “terrorists” and confirm that the restoration of democracy had been possible thanks to their “sacrifice.” During these years, notorious repressors continued labelling victims as “subversives” and extended this credit to their relatives and human rights organisations.

In 1984, the work of the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (CONADEP, National Commission on the Disappearance of People) and, a year later, the Military Juntas’ Trial involved the implementation of the rule of law and the advancement of the paradigm of human rights as a key framework for interpreting dictatorial violence.³³ At the same time, disappeared individuals were recognised as subjects whose human dignity had been destroyed, while repression began to be defined as a criminal act. In this new scenario, the survivors’ accounts gradually received greater social recognition, and their statements came to be considered a source of “truth.” This legitimisation was possible thanks to the strengthening of the humanitarian paradigm as a hermeneutical model, within which the political activities of disappeared persons were downplayed in favour of their status as victims. However, this separation reveals ongoing difficulties in constructing this figure and separating it from connotations of subversion.

Faced with this decline in the war discourse, the group *Familiares y Amigos de Muertos por la Subversión* (FAMUS, Relatives and Friends of the Killed by Subversion) intervened to defend the prestige of the Armed Forces. In the initial years of transition, this organisation reclaimed the “armed victory,” and paid tribute to the “heroic fighters” and to those killed by the guerrilla. Both FAMUS and the military cadres viewed this adverse situation as a continuation of the “conflict,” now waged not with rifles but with ideas. Traces of the counterrevolutionary doctrine could be traced here, insofar as it stressed the importance of the cultural and psychological plane in the framework of a “total conflict.” Therefore, the notions of “counterinsurgents” were repurposed to refer to the political adversaries of the day, from human rights organisations and the president to the judiciary and the National Congress. This shows that war narrative had lost its hegemonic character, even though it found support and followers at the end of the 1980s in military sectors and nationalist groups.

The incoming president, Carlos Saúl Menem, included references such as “dirty war” and “terrorism” into his language, although his most far-reaching measures followed a logic akin to the “theory of two demons”. Hence, the pardons of 1989 and 1990 affected both the political-military organizations and the Armed Forces. In this new instance, war narratives of the 70s became less relevant. FAMUS disbanded at the beginning of the decade. In 1995, Martín Balza, then Commander in Chief of the Army, denied on television that a war had occurred but conceded that illegal acts had been committed. There was no shortage of condemnation of the perpetrators, albeit from rather marginal quarters such as the *Asociación Unidad Argentina* (AUNAR, Argentinian Unity Association, founded in

33. Far from its origin, the “theory of the two evils” gave rise to relativising readings (the comparison of two opposing violences, the guerrilla and the military) and trivialising readings (the externality of civil society with respect to these actors). See Franco, Marina, La “teoría de los dos demonios” en la primera etapa de la posdictadura. In *Democracia, Hora cero. Actores, políticas y debates en los inicios de la posdictadura*, coordinated by Claudia Feld and Marina Franco, pp. 23-80. Buenos Aires, F.C.E., 2015.

1993) and the *Círculo Militar* (Military Circle), a benefit society of officers who advocated for the “anti-subversive consensus.”³⁴ In this context, the pro-Process memories were left in a residual position in the face of voices that, despite some tension, revived and even championed the commitment to revolution of those disappeared.³⁵

This memorial landscape was maintained until 2003, when Néstor Kirchner recovered the youth militancy of the 70s and approached a sector of the human rights movement. This resulted in a series of measures known as “memory, truth and justice” policies. If there were already “complete memory organisations” in existence, these groups were encouraged further by initiatives such as the conversion into a museum of the former clandestine detention centre, the *Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada* [Navy Mechanics School], and the restarting of trials for crimes against humanity. This was the case of the *Asociación de Familiares de Víctimas del Terrorismo en Argentina* (AFAVITA, Association of Relatives of Victims of Terrorism in Argentina), the *Asociación de Familiares y Amigos de Presos Políticos en Argentina* (AFYAPPA, Association of Relatives and Friends of Political Prisoners in Argentina) and Villarruel’s aforementioned CELTYV.

These groups began to congregate with retired military officers and activists of the liberal and nationalist right on dates such as 5th October, the anniversary of a Montonero attack against a Formosa garrison that became an occasion to protest against Kirchnerism.³⁶ Along with their demonstrations, masses and conferences, this ecosystem also generated a literature that recovered and revalidated the dictatorship’s narratives, including war topics. The list is long and includes both “niche” works (Nicolás Márquez’s *La mentira oficial*; Agustín Laje’s *Los mitos setentistas*) and bestsellers that managed to bring these stances to the mainstream (Juan B. Yofre’s *Nadie fue* and Ceferino Reato’s *Disposición final*).

Despite their fervent anti-Kirchnerism, these sectors did not find a natural ally in Macri’s government. Although there were controversies over the statements of some officials, the *Cambiamos* coalition was not willing to contravene the established consensus, due to either an excess of pragmatism or a lack of conviction. A clear example was seen in 2017, when the reduction of sentences issued to those convicted of crimes against humanity known as “2x1” was reversed.³⁷ The diatribes launched at the end of Macri’s presidency by Villarruel, Márquez and Laje, who later landed in the space led by

34. Paula Canelo, *La política secreta de la última dictadura argentina (1976-1983)* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2016), pp. 49-50.

35. An emblematic example of this turn was Eduardo Anguita’s and Martín Caparrós’ series *La voluntad* (Buenos Aires: Random House, 2021). It should not be overlooked that left sectors also took up the notion of war to characterise the 70s, but in a “revolutionary” sense.

36. The 2008 meeting can be watched on bit.ly/4a4Kgob.

37. In May 2017, the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation applied the act known as “2x1” including a sentence reduction that freed the repressor Luis Muiña. This court decision to stop a case of crime against humanity was a precedent for other convicted repressors to request the same benefit. At first, Mauricio Macri’s government supported the measure, but given the massive rejection of leadership and society, he backtracked and passed another act preventing this type of benefit for crimes against humanity. Valentina Salvi and Cinthia Balé. 2024. Impunidad, justicia y delitos de lesa humanidad: quiebre y rearticulación del consenso político tras el fallo “2x1” de la Corte Suprema de Justicia (Argentina, 2017). *Boletín del Ravignani*, 6, <https://doi.org/10.34096/bol.rav.n61.13025>

Milei, thus become understandable. This right did dare to be “politically incorrect” by maintaining that in the 70s the country was forced to defend itself in a “war.”³⁸

A few years later, this war narrative would be raised by an official body, although with nuances: if figures like Milei and Yofre admit that there were “excesses,” campaigners linked to the government deny the humanity of guerrillas and, therefore, the atrocious nature of repression. When Laje and Márquez claim that “in all fairness” they killed those “terrorists,” they bring to the forefront the idea of a “just war.”³⁹ Rather than a denial, as was often argued, what can be observed then is the updating and reaffirmation of the most inflexible pro-Process narratives. Of course, the 70s occupy such a small place in the official agenda that these distinctions do not cause fractures. However, they reveal a polyphony in a libertarian movement that is usually perceived as monolithic. No matter how “objective” one claims to be, the past has discernible social effects.

Terrorism. From Internal Enemy to Global Threat

The video produced by the Casa Rosada for 24th March 2024 focuses exclusively on the violence of political and military organisations, specifically Montoneros and the *Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo* (ERP, People’s Revolutionary Army),⁴⁰ and omits any reference to disappeared people as an object of commemoration, as well as state repression. The LLA memory proposal is exclusive to “victims of terrorism.” Interviewing the daughter of a soldier murdered by the ERP and a former member of Montoneros, the film appeals to the humanitarian narrative to show the suffering endured and inflicted and to thus give voice to the narrative “denied for 40 years of democracy.” In line with the activism in favour of the convicted perpetrators, the recognition of the “other dead” is glossed in the language of human rights, appropriating the slogan of “memory, truth and justice” coined by the relatives of those disappeared.

By using the word “terrorism” there is an intention to apply this category to those individuals who were branded as “subversives” before and during the dictatorship and who ended up on the lists of those disappeared. In a television interview focusing on her moral suitability as a candidate for the vice presidency, Villarruel responded to her critics with the following statement:

The problem is when these accusations come from those who deny terrorism, terrorism alone, and besides they are relatives of people who were part of terrorism. In the case of the Secretary of Human Rights, Pietragalla is the son of two combatants of

38. The commemorative short film can be watched on bit.ly/3ZYEEak.

39. An example can be found on bit.ly/40nxFZO.

40. Among the political and military organisations that proliferated in the 1960s and 1970s, Montoneros and the ERP were considered the most important. The first of these aspired to form a “Tendencia Revolucionaria” (“Revolutionary Tendency”) within Peronism and the second was influenced by Trotskyism and Guevarism.

armed organisations who committed acts of terrorism, in the case of Victoria Montenegro (...) she is the daughter of combatants of the People's Revolutionary Army.⁴¹⁴²

In addition to bypassing the fact that Pietragalla and Montenegro's parents were disappeared, and avoiding the fact that both had been appropriated by the military for more than three decades, CELTYV's founder launched an *ad hominem* in which the arguments of her adversaries were invalidated by the crimes of their parents: they were not "recovered grandchildren" but the "children of terrorists." In this way, the social valuation built around those disappeared and crimes against humanity, that was central to the configuration of the rule of law since democratic transition, became disputed. As noted, Villarruel was not the only one in the LLA who labelled the *Abuelas y Madres de Plaza de Mayo* as "mothers of terrorists." In this sense, libertarian discourse adopted a framework of collective guilt in which the organisations of the 70s are deemed criminal, but also the thousands of disappeared people, survivors and the relatives of victims.

The moral degradation of the "enemies," both in memorial and political fields, is boosted by metonymic epithets that articulate past and present to transfer and reinforce aversive feelings: the then "maximalists" and "subversives" become the today "lefties," "*kukas*" or "social justice warriors." The iterability of the concept of terrorism responds to its vague definition, beyond certain basic agreements such as the use of violence to instill fear in order to achieve political, religious or other objectives.⁴³ As part of the social discourse, this ambiguous use becomes problematic as long as it stigmatises subjects and groups, but it can also enable their legal and political prosecution. At this point, the vagueness of the term goes hand in hand with its historical density, as it has been implemented at different times and latitudes to designate very different actors. Just as the category is nurtured in retrospect, it is prospectively updated to the extent that it is retrieved to identify and describe processes on a local and international scale. Without wishing to be exhaustive, we can mention the attacks on the Israeli embassy and the *Asociación de Mutuales Israelitas Argentinas* [Association of Argentine Israelite Benefit Societies], on the one hand, and those of 11 September 2001 and on Atocha train station, on the other. The accumulation of layers between the past and present symbolically burdens the term, so it becomes a particularly effective instrument to politically and morally discredit adversaries.

The association of the term "terrorism" with the memory of people murdered by armed organisations dates back to the wakes and burials of the officers murdered since the end of the 1960s, continued by the rhetoric of the political, business, union and ec-

41. The dialogue can be watched on bit.ly/4h3Jn1m.

42. Original: "El problema es cuando esas acusaciones vienen de parte de quienes son negacionistas del terrorismo, del terrorismo a secas y segundo son familiares de personas que integraron el terrorismo. En el caso del Secretario de Derechos Humanos, Pietragalla es hijo de dos combatientes de organizaciones armadas que cometieron actos de terrorismo, en el caso de Victoria Montenegro (...) es hija de combatientes del Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo."

43. Saul, Ben. 2019. *Defining terrorism: A conceptual minefield*. In *The Oxford Handbook of terrorism*, edited by Erica Chenoweth, Richard English, Andreas Gofas, and Stathis Kalyvas, pp. 34-35. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

clesiastical leadership in the years prior to the coup d'état and the propaganda activity of the "Process." The concept, with additions such as "subversive," "stateless," "criminal," "insane" and "Marxist", pollinated public debate by being used to describe the actions of political and military organisations, but also of other social actors. During the transition, the term acquired a new meaning by those who investigated the repression to articulate a democratic memory of what happened. The rejection to violence coming from the left was reiterated, but military actions were condemned as a much worse form of terrorism, in line with the CONADEP report. In this sense, the notion has also become part of the discourse of human rights, while continuing to be used in its "counterrevolutionary" sense by the Armed Forces and by groups of relatives of those "killed by subversion."⁴⁴

With the *Ley de Punto Final* [Full Stop Act] (1986) and the *Ley de Obediencia Debida* [Due Obedience Act] (1987) as well as Menem's pardons, both the memory of those "killed by subversion" and the defence of "what has been done" progressively lost strength in social discourse.⁴⁵ Likewise, its legitimacy became fractured due to Balza's aforementioned statements, which appeared at the same time as the accounts of naval officer Adolfo Scilingo and the non-commissioned officer Víctor Ibáñez about the "death flights." The trilogy *In memoriam*, published by the *Círculo Militar*, was a reaction to these developments, although it also showed that military wrong memories had to adapt to a new scenario: by reconstructing the list of victims of political and military organisations, it emphasised the bloody aggressions and the suffering endured.

Largely confined to family members, perpetrators and their advocates, the memory of those "killed by subversion" was repositioned on the public scene alongside the slogan "complete memory" in the 2000s. With the restarting of trials for crimes against humanity in 2006, the groups of relatives and comrades-in-arms no longer vindicated those "killed by subversion," but the "victims of terrorism." Human rights were used as a paradigm with which to interpret the past and debate meanings in the sphere of memories. In other words, this activism acquired a dynamic that was both reactive and specular with the memory of those disappeared. On the one hand, the slogans "memory, truth and justice" took on new meanings, with the addition of "complete;" on the other hand, guerrilla crimes were made visible, as far as possible. In this way, emphasis was placed on kidnappings, attacks, assassinations and "popular trials" of political-military organizations, while the repression of the Armed Forces was concealed, minimised or justified. With this new rhetoric, the proscription that so weighed on military memory

44. Drawing on the work of the *Liga Argentina por los Derechos Humanos* [Argentinian League for Human Rights], Eduardo Luis Duhalde used the phrase "terrorist State" to describe the military regime. Eduardo Luis Duhalde, *El estado terrorista argentino* (Buenos Aires: Argos Vergara, 1983), p. 29. "State terrorism," that is, repressive practices aimed at generating terror, was distinguished from "terrorist State," understood as a historically new formation. For the author, the former led to the latter and survived it. See Jemio, Ana Sofía. 2021. Una revisión crítica del concepto "Estado terrorista". *Sociohistórica*, 48. [bit.ly/3BRbPEU](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sociohist.2021.03.001).

45. The so-called *Punto Final* (1986) and *Obediencia debida* (1987) acts meant that it was no longer possible to pass judgements on the middle and lower cadres of the Armed and Security Forces. In 1989 and 1990, military officers convicted of human rights violations were pardoned by President Carlos Menem.

was gradually lifted, and it enjoyed a greater presence in the public debate as the Kirchnerism/anti-Kirchnerism polarisation intensified.

The scenario that unravelled in September 2001, when the term “terrorism” was inflated, was certainly not unrelated to this reconfiguration. The organisations of “complete memory” were part of this development: in *BI*, a magazine linked to AFYAPPA, the concept was consistently used to describe political-military organizations, but also Kirchnerist officials.⁴⁶ At the same time, Villarruel established relations with “anti-terrorist” groups in Europe and Latin America, becoming an inspiration for CELTYV.⁴⁷ Thus, the “global war on terror” launched by the United States facilitated the adoption of a new meaning for the term “complete memory” while promoting the establishment of transnational networks.

For Kirchnerism, making the policies of “memory, truth and justice” compatible with external pressures was not easy. On the one hand, the 30th anniversary of the coup was the occasion for a re-edition of *Nunca Más* with a new prologue written by the Human Rights Secretariat headed by Duhalde. There, it was rejected that “a kind of game of opposing violence,” in reference to the “theory of two demons” justified the “State terrorism” attributable to the military junta.⁴⁸ On the other hand, that same year a *Ley Anti-Terrorista* (Anti-Terrorist Act) that received numerous criticisms from human rights organisations was approved in Congress.⁴⁹

The path that this concept travels therefore reveals its ability to endure: its lack of definition enables multiple uses, but also gives it density by dragging semantic sediments from different periods and compressing them into a hotchpotch. This is not a merely retrospective dynamic: this widely circulated figure produces versions of the past that, in turn, facilitate debate over the socially established notion of state terrorism and, at the same time, discredit its current advocates. Without going any further, Milei’s statement in the 2023 presidential debate took place shortly after the Hamas attacks, which the candidate condemned in line with his strong rapprochement to the State of Israel. Although he did not say so explicitly, his condemnation of both Montoneros and the Palestinian organisation was perfectly clear to his followers on social media. Under the prism of “terrorism,” history indeed appears as “eternal recurrence” in which new casts come to play old roles.

“Not 30,000.” From Political Defeat To The “Cultural Battle”

The incursion of far rights into the memorial landscape is part of the “cultural battle:” by disputing the meanings of the 70s, they attack human rights organisations, survivors of repression, journalism and other political forces. By driving a friend-en-

46. Grinchpun, Matías. 2021. Un remedio para los males de la memoria. *BI* y el “setentismo” antikirchnerista. In *Seminario “Memoria, pasado reciente y ascenso de las derechas Argentina, 2008-2019”*. bit.ly/4nY-C7rV.

47. Palmisciano, El tiempo de los otros, p. 59.

48. Secretaría de Derechos Humanos, Prólogo in *Nunca Más* (Buenos Aires, Libros y Casas: 2007). Available at bit.ly/4hc4nmI.

49. The CELS statement can be read on bit.ly/4ac60ye.

emy dynamic, these uses of the past strengthen identities. The public presentation of a conspiratorial discourse, which has condemned ideologically motivated historical falsifications since the transition to democracy, seeks above all to consolidate a positioning of victims in self-defence from a set of grievances. This is how Villarruel expressed it at the event held in September 2023: "... those who oppose remembrance are those who have their hands stained by [the blood of] our loved ones. Those who oppose it are those who have a monopoly on memory."⁵⁰ Those who lost the war, then, have gained peace by "distorting the truth" since the 80s.

This "deception" covers up "the great business of those labelled as disappeared."⁵² This is what Yofre states in the video prepared by the Casa Rosada for 24th March 2024: "(...) The story was not fully told for several reasons. Unfortunately, it was done for money ... because there was recognition for those who destroyed Argentine."⁵³ From this perspective, the 30,000 is a lie, but also the centrepiece of a profit-pocketing manoeuvre. Therefore, a belligerent memory is constructed that both seeks to restore a version of history that it believes silenced and despises those who confront it for their intellectual but above all moral dishonesty. In short, the disavowal of human rights organisations, but also of their memorial narratives, is a nodal point in the "ideological struggle for the past."

The discussion of the figures did not begin with the military and its advocates, but with the exiled, the relatives of those disappeared and human rights organisations, who denounced what happened and began to draw up lists. The Armed Forces replied with denials: the accusations were "delusional," the 5,500 cases included in the *Informe de la Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos de 1979* [1979 Report of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights] showed "bad faith," and the lists had, according to the Final Document, "incomplete," "confusing," and "erroneous" data. In response to the perpetrators' silence, estimates were put into circulation that sought to measure historically rather than mathematically a vast but vague repression due to its clandestine nature. Among other figures, that of 30,000 emerged, seen by those nostalgic for the "anti-subversive consensus" as a "psychological operation" to dirty the uniformed. *Cabildo*, a leading magazine of Catholic traditionalism, warned that the 30,000 would become, like the 6,000,000, a figure as "invented" as it was "intangible."⁵⁵ When CONADEP presented its report, the provisional number of 8,961 disappearances was considered as unrealistic as the previous ones.⁵⁶ Rather than offering an alternative number of victims, these sectors responded by enumerating, without any source, the number of "subversive actions."⁵⁷ The

50. Speech on bit.ly/40hA3kJ.

51. Original: "... quienes se oponen al recuerdo son los que tienen las manos manchadas de nuestros seres queridos. Quienes se oponen son los que tienen el monopolio de la memoria."

52. bit.ly/3ZYEEak.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Original: "... no se contó de manera completa la historia por varias razones. Lastimosamente se hizo por plata (...) porque hubo un reconocimiento para quienes destrozaron la Argentina."

55. Caponnetto, Antonio. 1984. Cuento y realidad. *Cabildo*, 72: 11.

56. Crenzel, *La historia política del Nunca Más*, p. 136.

57. Anónimo. 1983. Crónica nacional: Responso y exequias del Proceso. *Cabildo*, 62: 9.

consolidation of the humanitarian narrative since the mid-1980s undermined the repercussions of this controversy, although it persisted between the perpetrators and their advocates. The memory landscape had changed. When in 1987 the first project to grant pensions to the relatives of those disappeared was discussed, FAMUS did not accuse them of profiteering or lying but, in search of similar compensation, considered that after the war came reconciliation. It also accepted the possibility of excesses and, without recognising the victims of repression, said that the pain was matched.⁵⁸

Of course, the discrepancy between the *Nunca Más* figure and the one proposed by human rights organisations remained as a flank exposed to the readings of the past like those coming from the far right. However, for this debate to acquire the virulence it had in the 2000s, two elements were disappeared in addition to the policies implemented by Kirchnerism. First, the number acquired greater symbolic capital in the 90s; for those who demanded justice, the 30,000 became a reminder that their demand remained unsatisfied. Second, in the mid-90s, reparation laws were passed for the families of those disappeared, making it possible to include stages prior to the “Process” and broaden the definition of victim. It began to contemplate, for example, exiles and detainees who were later released, while militant trajectories were recovered. These developments gave rise to the suspicion that the “falsification” had political and pecuniary purposes, remarkably similar to the accusation launched by certain Shoah deniers.

By the mid-2000s, articles such as “los 30 000 desaparecidos: 25 000 mentiras por lo menos” [“The 30,000 disappeared: at least 25,000 lies”] were rife in AFYAPPA’s *B1* magazine, as was the accusation of illicitly taking millions.⁵⁹ Márquez offered the figure of 5,998 disappearances and 1,400 effective deaths reported to Congress, although without documentary references or methodological clarification.⁶⁰ Among his readers was a young Laje, who years later included the 30,000 in his list of “seventies myths,” “a number artificially inflated to obtain juicy stipends from the State.”^{61,62}

Likewise, the inclusion of the figure in the new prologue of *Nunca Más* generated a reaction from various activists and intellectuals external to the “complete memory” such as Graciela Fernández Meijide,⁶³ Héctor Leis⁶⁴ and Hugo Vezzetti.⁶⁵ The PRO remained largely distant from this controversy, as it did to the 70s in general, although there were resounding statements such as Macri’s in 2014, when he spoke of the “*curros*” (thefts) in

58. Gayol, Sandra and Gabriel Kessler. 2012. Tributo en la Argentina post-dictadura: Los “muertos por la subversión”. *Sociohistórica*, 29: 157-182. bit.ly/3PwLYoB, pp. 166-167.

59. 2008. Los 30 000 desaparecidos (I): 25 000 mentiras por lo menos. *B1*, 12:8.

60. Nicolás Márquez, *La otra parte de la verdad. La respuesta a los que han ocultado y deformado la verdad histórica sobre la década del '70 y el terrorismo* (Buenos Aires: Ed. de autor, 2004), pp. 138-139.

61. Original: “un número artificialmente inflado para obtener del Estado jugosos estipendios.”

62. Agustín Laje, *Los mitos setentistas. Mentiras fundamentales sobre la década de los 70* (Buenos Aires: Unión, 2011), p. 199.

63. Graciela Fernández Meijide, *La historia íntima de los derechos humanos en la Argentina. A Pablo* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2009).

64. Héctor Leis, *Un testamento de los años 70. Terrorismo, política y verdad en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Katz, 2013).

65. Hugo Vezzetti, *Sobre la violencia revolucionaria. Memorias y olvidos* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2009).

human rights.⁶⁶ The businessman was alluding to the complaints against *Sueños Compartidos* (Shared Dreams), a foundation belonging to the *Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo*. The expression was quickly redirected, however, to accuse the entire human rights movement of corruption. With Macrism in government, the issue was refloated when Darío Lopérfido, then Buenos Aires Minister of Culture, denied that there were 30,000 disappeared.⁶⁷ Despite the coarseness, the debate took place within the “*Nunca Más* pact,” since the figures of the CONADEP and the criminal nature of the repressive plan were accepted. In other words, the criteria of revisionism and the organisations of “complete memory,” challenging the 30,000 but also the 8,961, were not taken on by official bodies.

As a result of the above, the frustration that these sectors felt with the PRO, branded as a “false right,” grew, as did the search for a more radical alternative. Their opportunity came with the pandemic, when critics of the quarantine, Kirchnerism and human rights organisations found an audience receptive to “politically incorrect” content. While social media was flooded with Videlist video memes,⁶⁸ these voices made room in the media, a process enhanced by the candidacy and subsequent election of Villarruel as a national deputy. Indeed, both the support at the polls and the participation in events, interviews and television debates gave her speech visibility, but also acceptability. Once the “pact” has been broken, questioning the figures is no longer a “denialist” practice, but the expression of an emerging memory in struggle for hegemony.

Milei joined these questionings but, when choosing a number, he leaned towards one close to that of CONADEP and noted that a severe court punishment was appropriate. As in the case of the “war,” the LLA’s leader adopts a memory stance that differs to that of like-minded intellectuals and many sympathisers, positioned in a more intransigent trench. The difference evident, for example, in the discomfort caused by the pro-government legislators’ visit to imprisoned perpetrators,⁶⁹ as well as in the reservations of relatives and advocates who demanded that the president immediately release the “heroes.”⁷⁰

There were fewer objections regarding the “*curro*,” whilst human rights were subject to a brutal cut as part of the tax adjustment announced in the campaign, but also of the “cultural battle.” In addition to the dismissals, suspensions of programs and closures of agencies, there has been a delegitimisation of personnel involved, presented as part of the “caste.” Although LLA can argue that this is *laissez-faire*, since the State should not interfere, its actions represent a very concrete intervention in the memorial landscape. Beyond the nuances, the government has not been neutral but has clearly connected to prominent figures in the “complete memory” ecosystem, such as Márquez, Laje and Yofre. Ties that did not suffer even before the notorious friction between the

66. Mauricio Macri: “Conmigo se acaban los curros en derechos humanos” [“I’m going to finish the *curros* of human rights”]. *La Nación*, 8/12/2014. bit.ly/3acBKVT.

67. Darío Lopérfido: “En Argentina no hubo 30 mil desaparecidos”. *Infobae*, 26/1/2016. bit.ly/3FrZOMc.

68. Varela, Mauro. 2024. Memoria, *shitposting* y justicia: el uso de memes y su apropiación metapolítica de las nuevas derechas en Argentina. *Identidades*, 26: 186-207. bit.ly/3DXRNcm.

69. A column can be read on bit.ly/4m5Y6LA.

70. Saferstein, Ezequiel and Matías Grinchpun. 2024. Viva la Derecha Fest: Un “happening” reaccionario en tiempos de Milei. *Nueva Sociedad*. bit.ly/3PFhmBu.

president and Villarruel. If the logic of the “cultural battle” divides the world into two sides, LLA has unmistakably chosen its own.

Conclusion. Hauntology Of The 70s

According to Mark Fisher, late capitalism has a hauntological character. For decades, cultural production has been stalled by the reiteration of forms and languages, a recycling process often disguised as nostalgia.⁷¹ The other side of commercialised retromania lies, for the author, in a longing for those lost futures that remain unrealised in the fashions of thirty, forty or fifty years ago. This includes emancipatory projects, but also conservative ones. In this sense, the centrality of memory within the “cultural battle” waged by the far rights at a global level could be presented as the political symptom of a historical awareness that, incapable of visualising a future, tries to fill that void with obsessive projections of the past.

In the face of the LLA’s memorial stance, the metaphor of time as “a flat circle” makes sense: in its discourse, overlapped “seventies” clichés reappear, but also older ones, as part of a long conservative, reactionary and authoritarian tradition of the Argentinian 20th century. For example, the refoundational ambition to make a change “once and for all” reproduces the ambitions of many elected governments over the last forty years, but also a *leitmotiv* of the successive coups d’état since the 1930s. In this sense, it has been seen that libertarian discourse takes up the notion of “war” to describe the Argentinian situation five decades ago. This figure is manifestly opposed to the cycle that began with the democratic transition and seeks, without hesitation, to restore explanations that had been delegitimised. Some voices also consider human rights violations as “excesses” that, as such, deserve to be punished, while others, in a more reactionary way, justify “what has been done.” Finally, with LLA the restorative nostalgia of the “Process” returns. With the “national essence” threatened, they feel the calling to protect it by returning to a lost golden age, vaguely located in the *Belle Époque*, “when we were a powerhouse.” Without socialism, feminism or trans people, libertarians could add.

But nothing comes back the same, as contexts and uses have been transformed. The “killed by subversion” are recovered as “victims of terrorism” in a memorial twist that abandons the *Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional* [National Safety Doctrine] to appropriate the humanitarian narrative relying, in turn, on the theory of global threats. President Milei avoids discussing the legitimacy of CONADEP head-on, so do several of his supporters, but he takes up from the “complete memory” organisations the accusation that there was a falsification of history to discredit the Armed Forces and collect large compensation from the victims of State terrorism. In this sense, the return and the refoundation are presented as a complicated undertaking: as Reinhart Koselleck pointed out, “in the story, something always happens more or less than what is contained in the previous data.”⁷²

71. Mark Fisher, *Los fantasmas de mi vida. Escritos sobre depresión, hauntología y futuros perdidos* (Buenos Aires: Caja Negra, 2017).

72. Reinhart Koselleck. *Futuro pasado. Para una semántica de los tiempos históricos* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1993), p. 341. English translation retrieved from Koselleck, Reinhart, *Social History and Conceptual His-*

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