

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF "Ideas and Influence: A Comparative Study of the Ideological Space in Latin America (Part 1. Argentina)" SURVEY

Contemporary Latin America is undergoing a transformation of political and public discourse. The traditional boundaries between left and right, liberal, conservative, nationalist, and socially oriented ideas are becoming less clear-cut. Ideology now manifests not only in party platforms and political statements but also in the everyday perceptions of citizens, the activities of interest groups, university and expert circles, the media, and digital platforms.

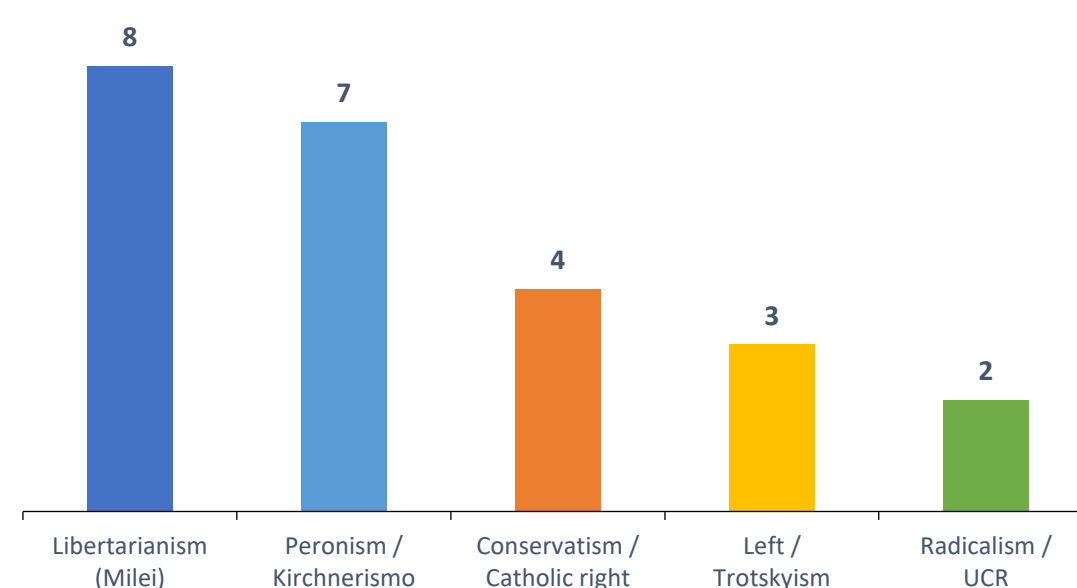
Objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to determine how the contemporary ideological space of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Mexico is formed and how it functions. Comparing these countries will allow us to distinguish general regional trends from national specificities and to understand how universal political ideas are adapted to the historical experience of each nation, its social tensions, and its current interests.

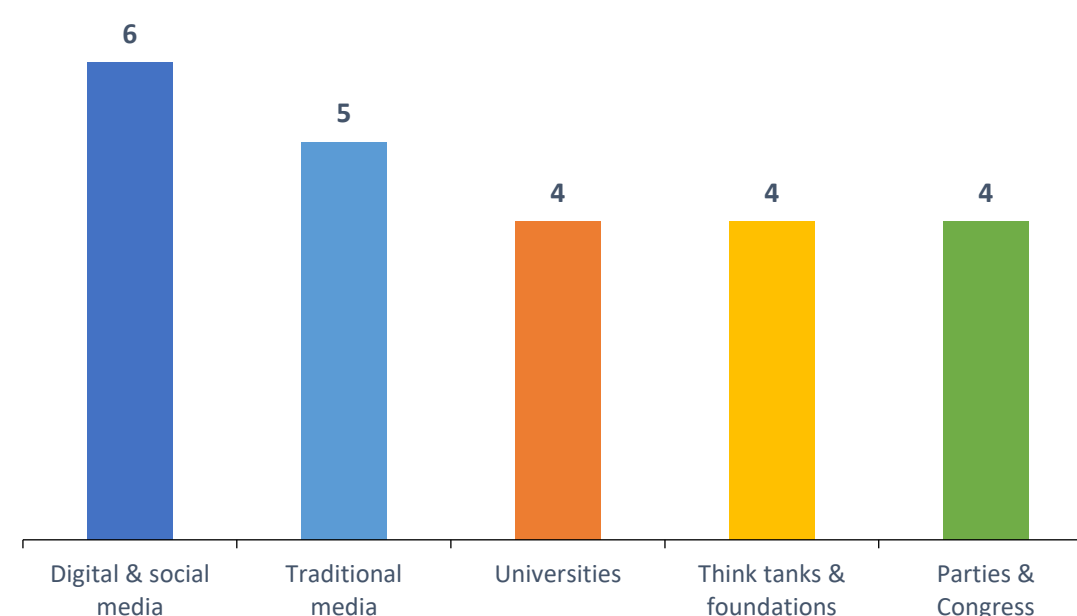
At the core of the study are the following questions: which ideologies are actually represented in the public space; who produces, interprets, and disseminates them; which political, economic, social, and religious groups use ideological agendas to advance their interests; and whether there are stable centres of ideological reproduction in universities, state institutions, political parties, the media, and the digital environment. Particular attention will be paid to leading intellectuals and contemporary postmodern ideological schools, the national adaptation of foreign concepts, the influence of external actors, and the engagement of young people in the study, use, and dissemination of ideologies.

The participation of national experts is essential, as formal party documents, election results, and media publications do not fully reveal the real mechanisms of ideological influence. Expert assessments will help clarify the content of political concepts in the national context, identify informal centres of public opinion formation, distinguish sustainable processes from situational political rhetoric, and map the main lines of ideological conflict.

Dominant ideological currents named by the panel



Where political ideas circulate



Is ideology still central?

Seven of the nine experts consulted describe ideology as still central to Argentine politics, though its function has changed. Rather than offering a coherent programme, it now works mainly as a marker of identity and a driver of polarization: Juan Negri (Torcuato Di Tella University) notes it shapes “political identities and structuring polarization” more than policy platforms, while Esteban Kaipl (UNL) links its renewed salience to the collapse of trust in parties and unions and the rise of hyperconnected, fragmented digital publics.

Two experts take a more skeptical view: Martha Hernández argues ideologies “have lost credibility and influence,” and Bautista Basso (Clarín) calls ideology “merely an argumentative tool” with little real bearing on outcomes.

Two poles, one on the defensive

The panel converges on two dominant poles. Javier Milei’s libertarian right — described by Ariel Goldstein (CONICET/UBA) as combining “more market, less state,” individualism and alignment with the United States — has become, in Alejandro Pelfini’s words, the current that “sets the public agenda.” Peronism, in its Kirchnerist variant, remains the main organizing force on the other side, though several experts note its credibility has been weakened by economic underperformance and corruption scandals.

Smaller currents persist at the margins: a hard-line Trotskyist left, a resurgent Catholic conservatism around Vice President Victoria Villarruel, and a much-diminished Radical centre.

“Ideology continues to play an important role,” says Agustina Properzi (CECPRI), “but it no longer serves as a unifying framework of ideas. Instead, it functions as a tool for constructing political identities, distinguishing opponents, and mobilizing emotions” — a shift from doctrine to badge that recurs throughout the panel’s responses.

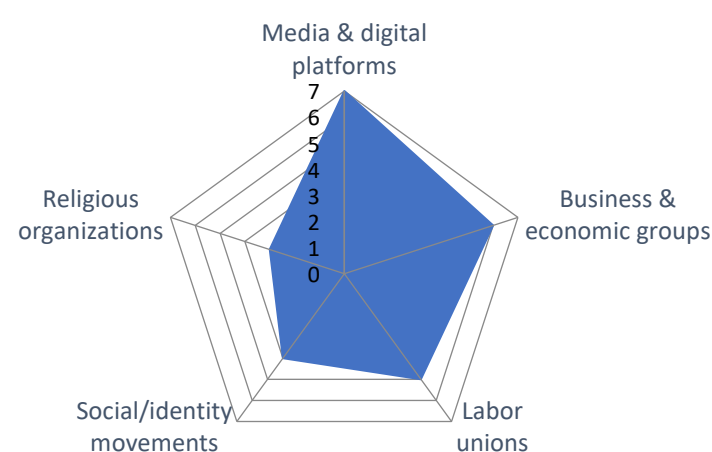
Who mobilizes ideology

Experts point to a shifting set of actors that use ideological framing instrumentally rather than as a matter of conviction.

- Business and agro-export groups — the Argentine Rural Society, financial interests, and libertarian foundations — push narratives of deregulation and a smaller state (Ariel Goldstein).
- Media outlets and digital platforms, from La Nación, Clarín and Página/12 to X, YouTube and TikTok, now shape public opinion as much as they report it (Bautista Basso; Ignacio Labaqui).
- Labour unions and social movements — feminist, human-rights and piquetero organizations — retain influence on specific issues even as their broader mobilizing power has declined (Juan Negri; Ignacio Labaqui).

Catholic and Evangelical groups remain active on cultural and moral questions, while religious and ideological lines increasingly run through digital rather than institutional channels.

Groups most often named as using ideological agendas



Where ideas circulate

Digital platforms have overtaken traditional institutions as the main arena for producing and testing political ideas. Ariel Goldstein (CONICET/UBA) notes that public universities “continue to play an important role,” but their intellectual authority has weakened relative to influencers, streamers and X/Twitter accounts; Ignacio Labaqui singles out X as “a highly conducive environment for extreme polarization.”

Traditional media remain influential — Agustina Properzi points to television as a key channel — and think tanks such as CIPPEC and Fundación Libertad y Progreso, alongside nonpartisan forums like the Club Político Argentino, continue to structure elite debate even as mass attention moves online.

A distinctly Argentine synthesis

Most experts agree that Argentina has developed its own national reading of global ideologies, anchored above all in Peronism. Ariel Goldstein describes it as a “distinct national synthesis combining social justice, an active state, trade unionism, popular leadership, economic sovereignty, and a working-class identity” — a synthesis so dominant that, as Ignacio Labaqui observes, the traditional left-right spectrum is often overshadowed by the Peronism-versus-anti-Peronism divide.

Today’s libertarian right, in Alejandro Pelfini’s reading, builds on the old anti-Peronist tradition but radicalizes it into anti-state, anti-political rhetoric. Only Martha Hernández dissents, seeing no genuinely national interpretation.

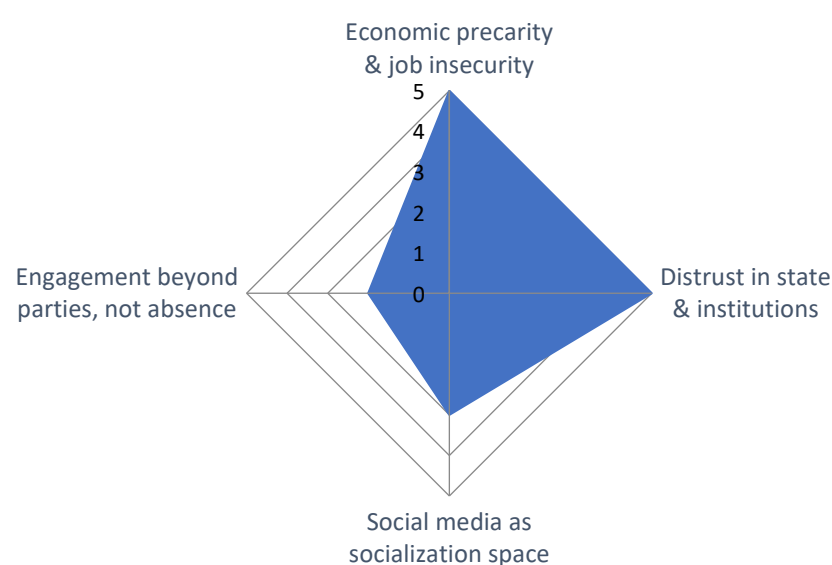
Ariel Goldstein warns of a deeper problem behind this shift: he has observed university students with “increasingly limited knowledge of key Latin American figures” — some advanced students, he notes, do not know who Pablo Neruda was — which he sees as fertile ground for “more immediate, emotional, and simplified forms of political socialization.”

What shapes youth engagement

Economic precarity is the most-cited driver: Alejo Sanchez Piccat and Ariel Goldstein both link youth engagement to job insecurity, blocked social mobility and difficulty accessing housing. A second, related factor is disillusionment with the state’s capacity to solve problems, which Ignacio Labaqui traces to decades of unmet promises across governments of every stripe.

Agustina Properzi pushes back on the premise itself, arguing young Argentines are highly engaged politically — just not through traditional parties — while Esteban Kaipl sees even apparent “de-ideologization” as its own ideological stance.

What shapes youth engagement with ideology



No single thinker dominates Argentina's ideological conversation. Instead, the panel describes a fragmented landscape of reference points split sharply along ideological lines, and a broad consensus that external actors and transnational networks now play a significant role in shaping local political ideas.

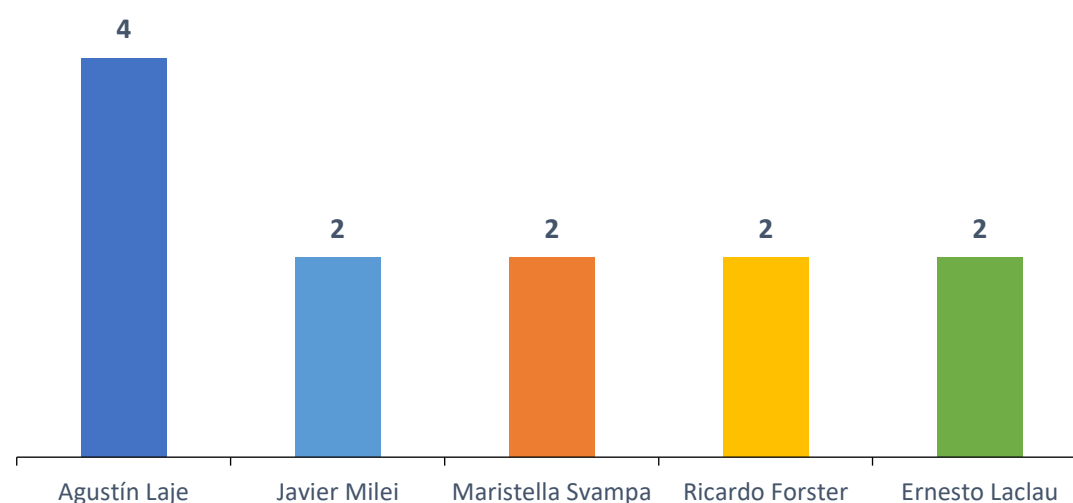
Reference points and outside influence

On the libertarian right, Agustín Laje is the name that recurs most often, frequently paired with Axel Kaiser and, more institutionally, Alberto Benegas Lynch (Jr.). President Javier Milei himself is treated less as a policy-maker than as an ideological reference point. On the Peronist and progressive side, no comparable consensus figure emerges: Ricardo Forster, Maristella Svampa, Ernesto Laclau and the late José Pablo Feinmann are each cited by different experts, reflecting — as Alejandro Pelfini puts it — a degree of “ideological orphanhood” on that side of the spectrum since the movement's historic leaders passed from the scene.

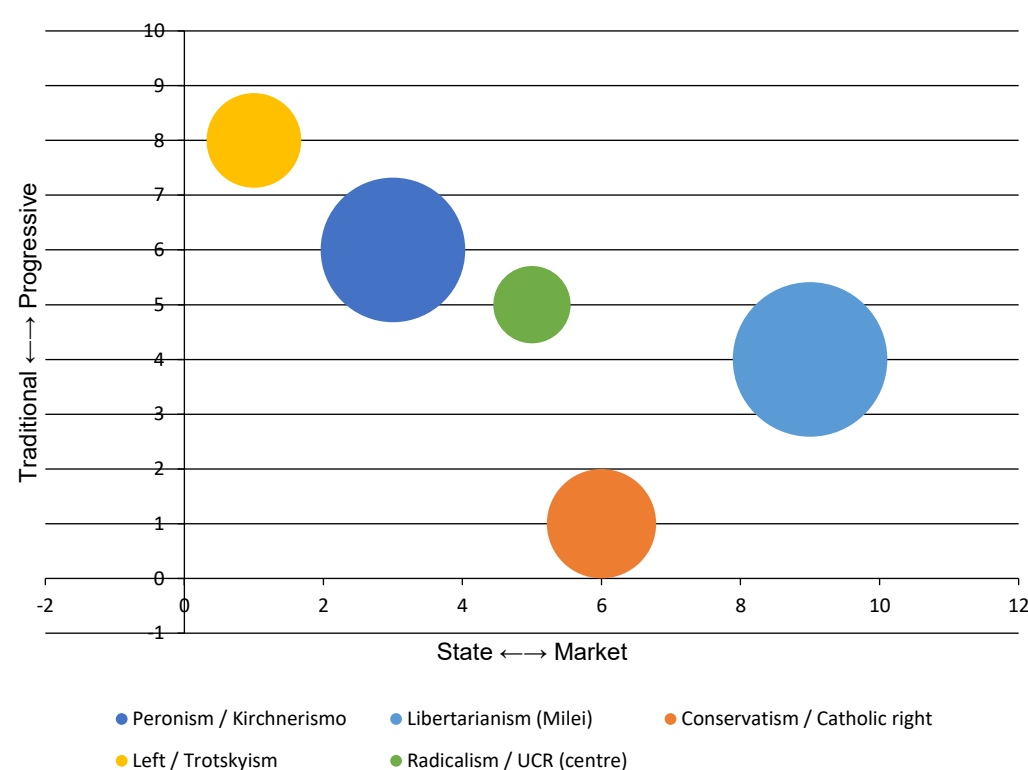
Eight of the nine experts describe external influence as significant, though channelled very differently across the spectrum. Transnational conservative and libertarian networks (CPAC, Foro Madrid, Fundación Disenso) connect Argentina to the United States and Spain; German party foundations (Adenauer, Ebert, Naumann) engage more moderate and progressive actors; and multilateral bodies such as the IMF, World Bank and UN continue to shape economic and rights-based agendas.

Only Martha Hernández dissents, judging that external actors “do not really have much influence” on Argentine political thought — a minority view against a panel that otherwise sees the country's ideological space as increasingly porous to ideas, funding and networks originating abroad.

Most-cited intellectual reference points



Argentina's ideological space (illustrative synthesis)



Channels of external ideological influence

