

The Ultra-Right Is Governing Argentina. Who Is Javier Milei And What Is He Doing?



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07-04-2024 ~ On December 10, 2023, Javier Milei was elected president of Argentina with 55.6 percent of the vote. The eccentric president has attracted global attention for his outrageous media style, his extreme ideas like “blowing up” the Central Bank of Argentina, and a mixture of messianism and mysticism with religion and [canine esotericism](#). Beyond the media show, Milei represents a radical shift in a country governed by progressivism during the last twenty years—Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015), and Alberto Fernández (2019-2023)—except for the interval of Mauricio Macri (2015-2019), when it was clear that the institutions of the public (for health care, for education, and more) were considered to be inviolable.

Javier Milei’s public appearance began as a commentator on different [television programs](#). He was one of the promoters of the protests against the mandatory isolation imposed during the pandemic, alleging the restriction of individual freedoms, and based on his popularity in social media, he was [elected national deputy](#) in the legislative elections of 2021 for his party “La Libertad Avanza” (Liberty Moves Forward). In 2023, with a strong erosion of the ruling party due to a dragging and poorly managed economic crisis, and an alliance with the conservative right “Juntos por el Cambio” (Together for change), he became President of the country.

Javier Milei defines himself as an anarcho-capitalist and a disciple of the Austrian economic school. What does this mean? Contrary to global practices of economic protectionism, Milei proposes unrestricted market freedom. He also proposes it not only as a foreign trade policy but also as a domestic policy.

Based on [Murray Rothbard's philosophy](#), Milei considers the state an illicit association that appropriates taxpayers' money to sustain the privileges of the "political caste." He believes in the market as the "natural" regulator of life in society and, therefore, public ownership and administration of services as an aberration. For instance, he believes public education and public health should not exist. This philosophy vindicates the "Law of Talion," or an "eye for an eye," as a valid practice of justice.

From this perspective, he intends to position himself as one of the leaders of the global ultraright that discusses [combating](#) "cultural Marxism." This is the way in which they characterize progress for rights, women, sexual diversity, migrants, and those excluded from the system in general. Milei also adopts a [denialist position with respect to climate change](#) and the scientific evidence for it.

From Political Philosophy to Government Practice

From his role as economic columnist, and presidential candidate, Milei promised the end of inflation, which averaged 8.6 percent monthly in Argentina in 2023 until Milei took office, and the dollarization of the economy.

Since he took office, as part of his economic policy, he has caused a devaluation of more than 100 percent of the local currency and embarked on a strong deregulation of economic activity, which implied an increase in the prices of basic goods and services. Additionally, as administrator of the state's resources, he slowed down investment in public works and [cut expenses](#) at all functional levels.

These measures provoked a great redistribution of income from the working class to the sectors that live off the economic and financial income it produces as well as big businessmen. They also created an economic recession that equals and in some sectors exceeds the levels reached during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this context, the government celebrates that inflation has been reduced monthly since it took office (from 25.5 percent in December caused by the devaluation to 4.2 percent in May), and boasts of a fiscal surplus (which hides the actual debt of the country). But the purchasing power of the minimum salary

(considering a total basic food basket) was 30 percent, poverty reached [55 percent](#) of the population in the first quarter of 2024 (with an increase of approximately 11 percent in the first 3 months of government), and an increase in the unemployment rate is expected due to the magnitude of the recession and the layoffs that have already taken place.

This economic arrogance is spread from the executive power to the rest of the powers of the state, especially toward the legislature and the federal governments; such arrogance pressures and extorts the institutions of the state so that whatever decrees and laws are proposed by the executive have to be approved without discussion. Given the impossibility of such power to the executive, it had to negotiate with its political allies and give them ambassadorships in exchange for their support.

The official discourse and public policy persecute and target the [freedom of the press](#), the institutions of national culture, those rights that guarantee the [lives of women who have been raped](#), those laws that promote non-discrimination in terms of [sexual orientation](#) and xenophobia, and institutions such as public universities, [social movements](#), and human rights organizations.

Milei's foreign policy is torn between the attempt to obtain dollars to maintain its anti-inflationary policy and its [ultraright](#) ideological positioning. For instance, it exaggerates positions against China but later renegotiates [a swap](#). It [defends the state of Israel](#) from charges against the genocide Israel is perpetrating in Palestine, but always from behind the cloak of the Western empire.

How Long Will It Last?

One of the most heard phrases in Argentina, once Milei entered the presidential balloting, was "He is not going to do everything he says." This phrase served both to justify voting for him and to protect the voters emotionally from the disaster that would follow if he won the presidency. However, Milei is doing quite a lot of what he said.

The other most frequently heard phrase is "How long will it last?" Although the politically correct answer is "four years" as in every democratically elected government in Argentina since the reestablishment of democracy in 1983, the economic and social crises experienced do not leave room for such an accurate answer and even less so with the application of policies so extremely detrimental

to the majority.

If we look at his economic plan and review Argentina's history, we can find similarities with two recent historical moments. The first is Carlos Menem's government (which for Milei was the best in Argentina's history) and the second is Fernando De la Rúa's government.

Menem's government (1989-1999) applied structural changes at the economic level (neoliberalism). It had a boom moment (which allowed Menem to be reelected) by curbing inflation achieved by the exchange rate parity with the dollar. This was sustained at the beginning of the policies of privatizations of services and public goods as well as of foreign indebtedness. However, it resulted in the closing of many national companies and industries and an increase in unemployment that exceeded 20 percent at the end of his second term in office.

De la Rúa's government (1999-2001) followed the policies of Menem's government. Although it entered power to carry out a "radical" change, it ended up in multiple debt renegotiations with the World Bank and the IMF. This resulted in strong fiscal adjustment programs and increasing poverty levels. De la Rúa ended his term of office declaring a state of siege, resigning, and leaving the Government House by helicopter.

Within this framework, Milei has begun to implement an economic plan that reduces inflation and reactivates economic activity as Menem did if he obtains new IMF loans, privatizes companies, and obtains dollars to liquefy Argentina's banking system; such policies will have similar consequences in terms of economic activity, employment, and poverty in a shorter period of time. Or, if he does not manage to access the necessary funds in dollars, he will have to rely on ever greater economic adjustment and repression with a government closer to that of De la Rúa. Helicopters should be on standby.

For the time being, for six months the streets of the City of Buenos Aires and the central squares of all the provinces of the country have been the [epicenter of constant mobilizations](#) against the policies applied and the laws promoted by the government. Among the government's adherents, though, the situation continues to be justified under arguments such as "We are in bad shape, but we are doing well," "We have to let it govern," and "Who did you want to vote for?" Those who still support Javier Milei cling to the fall in the inflation rate, but the latest polls

also reflect [a fall in his positive image](#), especially in the provinces of the interior of the country where Milei received strong support to reach the presidency.

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