



GENERAL JULIO ARGENTINO ROCA STATUE

Buenos Aires, Argentina

-34.61033, -58.374953



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Executive Summary

Former Argentine President Julio Argentino Roca remains a divisive and controversial figure in his home country. Despite forging the foundations of the modern Argentine state, Roca's military campaigns in Patagonia in the 'Conquest of the Desert' campaign, has led to claims that he perpetrated genocide against indigenous Argentine populations. In the modern era, activists have called for his statue's removal, while others have adamantly defended it. This case study explores the controversial legacy Roca has left behind in Argentina.

Introduction

The bronze statue of Julio Argentino Roca in Buenos Aires, located in a privileged position near la Casa Rosada, Argentina's presidential house, has become a focal point of protest and debate in twenty-first-century Argentina. Erected in 1941 to honour the army general who directed the so-called "Conquest of the Desert" (*La Conquista del Desierto*), the statue was uncontroversial for almost fifty years. However, criticism arose in the 1990s and is yet to die down.¹ After a significant bill proposing its removal in 2012 was unsuccessful, the statue remains, and debate over its future is ongoing. This case study looks at the divisive legacy Roca continues to have in his home nation.

Background

The Planning, Construction and Inauguration of the Statue

The monument to Julio Argentino Roca was inaugurated in 1941. The statue aimed to celebrate the man who led the 'Conquest of the Desert' (1878-85) and, in his two terms as president (1880-1886, 1898-1904), is associated with the modernisation of nineteenth-century Argentina. The monument made of pure bronze stands in the middle of Plazoleta Ricardo Tanturi in the historic neighbourhood of Montserrat, Buenos Aires, where Avenida Presidente Julio A. Roca, Calle Adolfo Alsina and Calle Perú meet. The statue is located 200 metres from Buenos Aires' Plaza de Mayo and stands at over 5.5 metres from the ground, on top of a granite pedestal.²

The first proposals for a statue of Roca were made under the presidency of Marcelo T. de Alvear in 1925. The senator for the province of Corrientes, Evaristo Pérez Virasoro, presented a bill before the House, arguing a monument to commemorate Roca was needed, as there had not yet been any public tribute to the ex-president, except for his mausoleum in Buenos Aires' Recoleta Cemetery.³ Virasoro argued Roca should be celebrated as his 'two historic presidencies . . . expanded the moral and material credit of the country,' and that the 1879 *Conquista del Desierto* was the moment in which he 'dislodged the savages from the vast regions' inhabited by indigenous peoples.⁴ While Virasoro's project was not approved, his comments illustrate how Roca was paradoxically hailed both as *conquistador* and peacemaker, an attitude repeatedly expressed throughout the following decades.⁵ Ten years after the first proposals, in the wake of the 1930 coup d'état and in the midst of an economic crisis, a new bill was proposed. By 1938, the National Commission had decided not only to construct the monument in Buenos Aires but also to construct three others: in San Carlos de Bariloche (1941), Río Gallegos (1941) and San Miguel de Tucumán (1943), as well as to inaugurate commemorative plaques and create a historical archive detailing the life of Roca.⁶

¹ Río Negro, "El monumento de la polémica sin fin," *Río Negro*, April 7, 2017.

² Luciana Romão, *Espacio público y disputas simbólicas por la memoria en Argentina: Los monumentos al gral. Julio A. Roca en la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires y en San Carlos de Bariloche* (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2017), 87.

³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴ Translation by author; *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 78.

Uruguayan sculptor José Zorrilla de San Martín and Argentinian sculptor Alejandro Bustillo won the international competition held to choose the design of the sculpture and were responsible for the equestrian sculpture and base, respectively. Zorrilla de San Martín's equestrian statue sees Roca with a concentrated expression, wearing the uniform of a general and his presidential sash. The allegorical figures designed by Bustillo on the sides of the statue's base are also highly symbolic. One is an image of Argentina herself, armed with a shield and spear entwined with an olive branch; the other represents the Patagonian desert, wearing the Phrygian cap (a representation of republican unity), holding the national flag in one hand, and a plough in the other. The monument narrates the historical moment in which Roca stopped being a military leader in order to become a statesman, leaving the desert behind him and looking forward to the peaceful Republic.⁷ In April 1937, a ceremony was held where the foundational stone of the statue was laid. On October 19, 1941, 27 years after Roca's death, the statue was officially inaugurated in a grand event.⁸

Julio Argentino Roca and His Legacy

Having held office for twelve years across two terms, Roca is Argentina's longest-serving president. The statue is a testament to the twentieth-century perception of Julio Argentino Roca as a great figure in Argentinian history. Resultantly he has been widely commemorated in public spaces, having had many great monuments to him erected in the 1940s as well as streets and buildings having been named after him and his face appearing on the hundred peso banknotes. Nevertheless, these symbols may not truly reflect his popularity – Roca's son, Julio Argentino Pascual Roca (Vice President of Argentina, 1873-1942), likely had a pivotal role in his commemoration.

While Roca's presidency has been praised for decades, since the end of the twentieth century, the heightened debate around his public image has led to a re-evaluation of his legacy. Roca became Minister of War in 1877 under the presidency of Nicolás Avellaneda. Roca's predecessor, Adolfo Alsina, had begun the process of dealing with what the Argentinian government saw as *el problema del indio* (The Indian Problem), having constructed the 374km long trench referred to as *zanja de Alsina* (Alsina Trench). But Roca viewed Alsina as too moderate in his approach to the indigenous population, asserting, 'What nonsense, Alsina's trench!' and that 'the best system of dealing with the Indians, either by extinguishing them or throwing them across the Río Negro, is that of offensive warfare.'⁹ For Roca, the time was ripe for attacking indigenous territory. The Triple Alliance of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay had won the war with Paraguay in 1870; Argentina and Chile continued to clash over the border, and indigenous peoples were defending themselves more and more fiercely against the gradual usurpation of their land.¹⁰ In 1880 he was elected President of Argentina, and his controversial policies in Patagonia began.

During the Conquest of the Desert, Roca oversaw a 6,000-strong cavalry 'crushed Mapuche' and

⁷Ibid., 87-88.

⁸Ibid., 83-84.

⁹ Translation by author. Revisionistas, "El problema del indio", *Revisionistas*, n.d.

¹⁰ Felipe Pigna, "La conquista del desierto", *Historiador*, n.d, República Liberal (1880-1916),

other indigenous groups residing in Patagonia, which resulted in the death of more than 1000 people.¹¹ In addition, thousands more were captured and forced into becoming servants or held as prisoners, and prevented from having children.¹² Historical records of the dispatches sent during this campaign depict indigenous groups as 'barely human.'¹³ During the campaign, state forces under Roca's leadership executed prisoners and families in the 'name of the rights of civilization'¹⁴ in what is now largely termed a genocide within Argentinian historiography.¹⁵ The late anarchist writer and historian Osvaldo Bayer, one of the fiercest critics of Roca and the monument, has consistently argued that Roca was *un genocida*¹⁶ or a mass murderer. Roca's time as Minister of War has been widely documented by historian Felipe Pigna and Osvaldo Bayer, who describe the *Conquista* as a process of brutal abuse, torture, and enslavement towards the indigenous population, who were not able to defend themselves against the sheer number of soldiers and the modern weaponry of the Argentinian army.¹⁷

Despite his brutal legacy, Roca is still admired by some. On the centenary of Roca's death, the conservative newspaper *La Nación*, well known for its unapologetic defence of Roca, outlined his achievements in an editorial by writer Rolando Hanglin. Hanglin states that Roca honoured the motto he was elected under in 1880, 'Peace and Administration' (*Paz y Administración*), by acting decisively against the indigenous population, holding off Chile by pursuing expansion in Patagonia, and successfully establishing the bureaucratic structures which remain associated with the modern Argentine state.¹⁸ As his presidencies spanned a significant proportion of the years in which Argentina is considered to have become a modern nation, from around 1880 to 1910, he is considered by many as the fundamental actor in the modernization of Argentina.¹⁹ Key elements of this included extensive railway construction, the promotion of national industry and commercial alliances, and the development of Argentina's secular, public, and compulsory school system, with the number of students in Argentina multiplying from 86,927 to 180,768 between 1798 and 1804.

From this perspective, his supporters rebuke the claims of him waging genocidal policies against indigenous groups in Patagonia, instead contending that the annihilation of *Araucano* (Mapuche) culture was a process that had begun years before his tenure under Alsina and should be understood within its historical context.²⁰ Moreover, in Hanglin's view, the indigenous population would always reject settling down into a way of life that did not include pillage or plunder.²¹ Therefore, some conservative voices still see the presence of indigenous people in the Patagonian desert as a 'problem' that Roca was successful in solving.

¹¹ Rory Carroll, "Argentinian founding father recast as genocidal murderer," *Guardian*, January 13, 2011.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Walter Delrio et al, "Discussing Indigenous Genocide in Argentina: Past, Present, and Consequences of Argentinean State Policies toward Native Peoples," *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 5, no.2 (2010): 140.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Occidentales, "El escritor Osvaldo Bayer dijo que 'Julio Argentino Roca fue un genocida,'" *Occidentales*, April 12, 2007.

¹⁷ Felipe Pigna, *Los mitos de la historia argentina*, vol. 3 (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 2006); Osvaldo Bayer et al., *Historia de la crueldad argentina: Julio Argentino Roca* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del CCC, 2006).

¹⁸ Rolando Hanglin, "Roca, el grande," *Nación*, May 27, 2014.

¹⁹ Nicolás Pasamán, "OPINIÓN: Debates historiográficos en torno a la figura de Roca en su centenario," *Julio Argentino Roca Hoy*, September 21, 2016.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Rolando Hanglin, "Roca, el grande," *Nación*, May 27, 2014.

Julio Argentino Roca, therefore, remains a complicated figure of Argentina's national past, remembered by some as a hero and by others as a selfish killer. In recent times, his public image and political legacy have been increasingly questioned,²² so much so that Hanglin states that Roca has come to be considered '*el villano actual de la historia argentina*'— the figure currently considered *the* villain of Argentina's history.²³

History of the Contestation

After Roca's death in 1914, the 'Conquest of the Desert' was rapidly used by Argentinian governments as the nation's foundational myth. Roca himself became associated with the national legitimization of Argentina, a myth clearly represented in the Buenos Aires monument's symbolic imagery.²⁴ This myth was particularly useful because it provided a narrative with which to justify the establishment of the country's borders while also conveniently legitimizing the army as the cornerstone of the Argentine state.²⁵

Years later, in 1979, under Argentina's last military dictatorship, Roca's narrative was easily integrated into the regime's ideology, now alongside a stark anti-Chileanism in the wake of intensifying tensions over Argentina's territorial claims in the Beagle Channel.²⁶ Hence, during Argentina's transition to democracy in 1983, Roca's image, together with its associated national myth, came under close scrutiny. Many raised the question of whether the nation's history of military violence and authoritarianism was actually an endemic ill of the country, stemming from its very origin.²⁷

Public controversy around the statue itself first emerged meaningfully in 1997, when the first voices began to call for the removal of Roca's statues and for the promotion of public discussion on how Roca's history should be taught.²⁸ These discussions were fundamentally politically charged, with critics of Roca addressing the narrative heart of the nation's foundational myth. Those who question his legacy have in turn attempted to radically rethink the political grounds in which the Argentinian State has been built.²⁹

The process of questioning Roca's legacy reached its high point in May 2012, when Osvaldo Bayer and representatives of Argentina's indigenous groups began an educational campaign against Roca's personage.³⁰ By the 2010s, Bayer had become one of the most well-known adamant voices against Roca, arguing, 'Roca was no hero; he was genocidal. He always said that the indigenous peoples had

²² BBC Mundo, "Argentina: cuando un prócer es cuestionado por genocida," *BBC Mundo*, January 4, 2011.)

²³ Rolando Hanglin, "Roca, el grande," *Nación*, May 27, 2014.

²⁴ Facundo Cersósimo and Maíne Barbosa Lopes, "Julio A. Roca y la 'Conquista del desierto': monumentalización, patrimonio y usos del pasado durante las décadas de 1930 y 1940." *Quinto Sol* 23, no. 1 (2019): 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁸ Luciana Romão, *Espacio público y disputas simbólicas por la memoria en Argentina: Los monumentos al gral. Julio A. Roca en la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires y en San Carlos de Bariloche* (Buenos Aires: Teseo, 2017), 160.

²⁹ Diana Lenton et al., "Huellas de un genocidio silenciado: los indígenas en Argentina." *Conceptos*, no. 493 (2015): 119-142.

³⁰ Roca Magnani, "Con el monumento a otro lado," *Página/12*, May 19, 2012.

to be exterminated, whom he called savages and barbarians.³¹ In 2012, Bayer put forward a bill proposing the removal of the monument. In the bill, he refers to Roca as the *genocida-presidente* (the genocider-president), suggesting that, to critics, these two sides to Roca's legacy are in fact inseparable.³²

The monument has also been the site and subject of several protests and demonstrations, some of them led by indigenous peoples. For example, Daniel Jaramillo, part of the Mapuche community of Tambo Báez, argues against those who call on people to consider Roca's massacre of indigenous people within the historical context in which he lived:

They talk of context, but you cannot commit brutalities in the name of context. The historical damage is very great, monumental errors were made, and nobody was listened to. Roca's presence in the square is an offence to anyone's intelligence and an affront to my people.³³

Some critics have centred the experiences of the indigenous population in their arguments, such as Fernando Fernández Herrero, who in the same article makes the case that: In the local population, there is a high percentage of people with indigenous heritage, and for them, it is an act of violence to be forced to live with an image of the man who was their grandparents' murderer.³⁴

Roca's statue has also been desecrated on several occasions by protestors, who have thrown red paint over the front of the statue, the sword and the horse. For protestors and observers, the red stains symbolize blood in what has been considered an attempt to undermine the nation's triumphalist image.³⁵ Graffiti on the statue has also linked the violent past attributed to Roca with Argentina's more recent undemocratic past: "Roca=Videla", for example, equates the violence of Roca's *Conquista* to the violence of Argentina's last military dictator, Jorge Rafael Videla (1976-1981). Both figures have been referred to by critics as genocidal.³⁶ Interestingly, some critics, rather than calling for the removal or the destruction of the statue, argue that it should remain so that these important debates continue: in the newspaper *Río Negro*, one journalist, Adrián Moyano, commented, 'I prefer for the monument to be constantly resignified, that they stain it, that they attack it, that they cover it, that they put *kultrunes*³⁷ on it before it disappears.'³⁸

Decision-Making Processes

While criticism had been mounting for years, the most significant intervention against the Roca monument was marked by Osvaldo Bayer's 2012 bill proposing the removal of the statue from the centre of Buenos Aires, which was discussed by the City Council. Article 1 of the bill proposed that

³¹ *Página/12*, "Bayer: 'Roca no se merece ningún monumento,'" *Página/12*, May 18, 2012.

³² Alejandro Bodart, "Retiro y traslado del monumento a Julio A. Roca y colocación del monumento a la Mujer Originaria. (13/03/12)", *Alejandro Bodart*, March 13, 2012.

³³ *Río Negro*, "El monumento de la polémica sin fin," *Río Negro*, April 7, 2017.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ María Ledesma, Paula Siganevich and Luciana Anarella, *Piquete de ojo: visualidades de la crisis: Argentina, 2001-2003*, (Buenos Aires: Nobuko, 2007), 18.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ The *kultrun* or *cultrún* is a percussion instrument of the indigenous Mapuche people.

³⁸ *Río Negro*, "El monumento de la polémica sin fin," *Río Negro*, April 7, 2017.

the statue would be transported to La Larga in Daireaux, where Roca's heirs still own and maintain land inherited from their great-grandfather.³⁹ Bayer argued that, in this way, they would be able to thank their benefactor 'each Sunday morning.'⁴⁰ Article 2 proposed that the Roca monument be replaced with a monument to indigenous women (*Monumento a la Mujer Originaria*) be erected in tribute to the nation's indigenous peoples.⁴¹ While attracting widespread attention and debate, the bill was ultimately unsuccessful.⁴² The bill gives a detailed account as to the motivations underlying the call to remove Roca's statue as well as the legal basis for doing so.⁴³ It begins by invoking the authority of Law 83 and articles 89 and 90 of the City's Constitution and articles 14, 22, 29, and 36 of the National Constitution, as well as that of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other major treaties, such as the Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, all of which are recognized by the Argentinian Constitution.

From the point of view of the petitioners, Roca's violation of the aforementioned treaties means that his statue should be removed, alongside a wide number of public streets and monuments bearing his name that are located all around the country, from Córdoba to Neuquén and Santa Fe. The bill refers to a 2010 case law in which judge Elena Liberatore ordered the removal of the denomination of street and public places related to illegitimate governments. A full list of streets and monuments which once bore Roca's name, but have since been changed, is given. Notable examples include Antarctic school no. 38 at Base Esperanza, the name of which was changed from Julio A. Roca to President Raúl Alfonsín; a square a Chajarí, Entre Ríos, which was changed from Plazoleta Conquista del Desierto to Plazoleta de la Memoria ('Memory Square'); and a street in the town of El Hucú, Río Negro, which was changed from Calle Roca to Calle Lonco José Mañke Cayucal, a Mapuche leader.

The proposals are followed by a full account of Roca's misdemeanours, which range from racism to exploitation. The bill addresses those who justify Roca's actions with the argument that they should be contextualised within his time: through primary documents, the petitioners make the case that Roca did not simply follow the accepted opinion of the time but rather fought ruthlessly in defence of his own self-interest. They argue that Roca took advantage of others, exploited workers, enslaved and publicly degraded indigenous people, and justified his actions through an elitist, colonial, and racist ideology as means of amassing his wealth. According to Bayer, Roca's racism was exemplified not only by the *Conquista*, but also by the fact that he effectively re-established slavery in Argentina in 1879, against the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata's 1816 Assembly of the Year XIII, which had passed the Freedom of the wombs law (*Libertad the vientres*), a principle which began the process of the abolition of slavery in Argentina.⁴⁴

³⁹ Alejandro Bodart, "Retiro y traslado del monumento a Julio A. Roca y colocación del monumento a la Mujer Originaria. (13/03/12)", *Alejandro Bodart*, March 13, 2012.

⁴⁰ Perfil, "Osvaldo Bayer: 'Quiero sacar el monumento de Roca de Buenos Aires y llevarlo a sus bisnetos,'" *Perfil*, May 4, 2012.

⁴¹ Alejandro Bodart, "Retiro y traslado del monumento a Julio A. Roca y colocación del monumento a la Mujer Originaria. (13/03/12)", *Alejandro Bodart*, March 13, 2012.

⁴² Nicolás Pasamán, "OPINIÓN: Debates historiográficos en torno a la figura de Roca en su centenario," *Julio Argentino Roca Hoy*, September 21, 2016.

⁴³ Alejandro Bodart, "Retiro y traslado del monumento a Julio A. Roca y colocación del monumento a la Mujer Originaria. (13/03/12)", *Alejandro Bodart*, March 13, 2012.

⁴⁴ Osvaldo Bayer, "Desmonumentar," *Página/12*, May 16, 2010,

The extent of Roca's misdeeds is well documented, with a variety of primary sources showing Roca's behaviour and that of other contemporaries who did indeed fight against racism, enslavement, and exploitation. Strikingly, even Juan Bautista Alberdi, described as one of the fathers of the Argentine Constitution, argued the government was using anti-indigenous rhetoric to impose itself against its dissatisfied citizens, stating, 'the fight against the Indian was a pretext for governments to arm themselves and impose themselves against the discontented.'⁴⁵ Moreover, José Hernández's foundational work of Argentinian literature, *Martín Fierro*, contains the following words:

We do not have the right to expel Indians from territory and even less to exterminate them . . . Society does not make out of governments agents of commerce, nor does it permit them to amass colossal riches.⁴⁶

Another notable example comes from the well-known conservative newspaper of the time, *La Prensa*, which reported on May 6, 1903, that:

The President affirms in his message that the Government applied martial law and the law of exile with the greatest restraint, but the facts, that are of public notoriety, show that these measures were, in their hands, instruments of terror . . . when it was repeatedly proven that those expelled individuals were peaceful working men, rooted in the country for many years, fathers of Argentinian sons, and despite everything they were uprooted from their homes and their families were condemned to the most atrocious misery.⁴⁷

Yet the transfer of the statue was rejected. A 1943 law had declared the site of the statue a national historic site (*Lugar Histórico Nacional*)⁴⁸ – hence, the City Council could not issue a law to remove it. In fact, in 1997, the newspaper *La Nación* had emphasized that only a national law could supersede law 12.665 since the nation's executive power is in charge of granting and removing the monument's status as a national historical monument.⁴⁹ Public debate, however, caught the attention of Argentinian President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-15), who is said to have personally intervened to remove Roca's image from the 100 peso banknotes, instead issuing banknotes with Eva Perón's image.⁵⁰ Yet as of 2020, Roca's banknotes remain in circulation.⁵¹

The centenary of Julio Roca's death took place in 2014 amidst public controversy. Officially, the government rejected calls for a public celebration in his honour.⁵² Dissatisfied with the government's decision, however, Cecilia de la Torre, the representative of opposition party *Propuesta Republicana* (the liberal right-wing political party of Mauricio Macri) proposed to include a commemorative plaque

⁴⁵ Alejandro Bodart, "Retiro y traslado del monumento a Julio A. Roca y colocación del monumento a la Mujer Originaria. (13/03/12)," *Alejandro Bodart*, March 13, 2012.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Facundo Cersósimo and Maíne Barbosa Lopes, "Julio A. Roca y la 'Conquista del desierto': monumentalización, patrimonio y usos del pasado durante las décadas de 1930 y 1940," *Quinto Sol* 23, no. 1 (2019): 8.

⁴⁹ *Nación*, "Lo decidió la Comisión Nacional de Museos. El monumento de Julio Roca es inamovible," *Nación*, February 1, 1997.

⁵⁰ *Capital*, "Reemplazarán los billetes de \$100 de Roca por nuevos con la cara de Evita," *Capital*, July 24, 2012.

⁵¹ *Cronista*, "Los billetes de \$100 con la cara de Roca siguen vigentes," *Cronista*, February 20, 2019.

⁵² *Clarín*, "El Centenario de Roca, una conmemoración silenciada," *Clarín*, October 19, 2014.

at the statue. This initiative found support amongst the right-wing press: *La Nación*'s editorial entitled '*La enorme figura de Julio Argentino Roca*' (The great figure of Julio Argentino Roca) underscores Roca's national achievements and scolds those rejecting the new plaque, concluding that 'it is desirable that we are able to, as a nation, vindicate the valuable figure of Roca instead of continuing to turn historical interpretation into yet another whim of the ruling government.'⁵³ The editorial is also critical of representative Alejandro Bodart and his political party, the *MST-Nueva Izquierda*, a socialist group accused by *La Nación* of stirring public debate away from them and towards the past, instead of attempting to solve present-day issues in Argentina with the aim of gaining public notoriety.

Summary and Conclusions

The controversy around Roca's statue touches the heart of the matter of two very different visions of Argentina's history. Those who defend Roca associate him with the modernization of an independent Argentine republic, while those who oppose Roca view the foundations of the Argentine state as resting on the massacre of the indigenous population and call for Argentina to rethink its political cornerstones. Thus, a key issue for those who wish to end the commemoration of Roca is that they not only must convince the nation to reject one of Argentina's foundational myths, but they will also have to provide a new enticing and convincing narrative in order for the nation to move forward.

Since the rejection of the 2012 bill and the 2014 debate, public attention over the monument seems to have diminished, although the opposing positions re-enact their differences on each anniversary of his death. The statue remains in its place while remaining controversial. Because of its privileged position in the centre of Buenos Aires, removing this particular Roca statue would be highly polemical and may also contribute significantly to the process of changing the many other statues, monuments, and even city names dubbed in Roca's honour. A central figure of Argentine history, there is yet to be a consensus in Argentina on what Julio Argentino Roca stands for.

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About Contested Histories

In recent years, there have been many contestations over memorials, street names, and other physical representations of historical legacies in public spaces. These contestations often reflect deeper societal tensions whether triggered by political transitions, demographic shifts, inter-ethnic strife, or a growing awareness of unaddressed historical injustices.

The Contested Histories project is a multi-year initiative designed to identify principles, processes, and best practices for addressing these contestations at the community or municipal level and in the classroom. Conflicts about history, heritage, and memory are a global phenomenon, and, although each case is different, comparative cases can indicate lessons learned and reflect best practices.

About IHJR at EuroClio

The Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation (IHJR) is a research centre at EuroClio - European Association for History Educators in The Hague, The Netherlands. The IHJR works with educational and public policy institutions to organise and sponsor historical discourse in pursuit of acknowledgement and the resolution of historical disputes in divided communities and societies.

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