

Argentina

By

Nishant

Sri Aurobindo Divine Life Education Centre
Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, India

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1. Introduction

- (i) Capital – Buenos Aires
- (ii) Other large cities – Cordoba, Rosario, La Plata, Mendoza
- (iii) Area – 2,780,092 sq. km.
- (iv) Population – 40,677,348
- (v) Language – Spanish, Italian, English, German, French
- (vi) Religions – Roman Catholic-92%, Protestant-2%, Jewish-2%, Others-4%
- (vii) Literacy – 97.2% (est. 2001)
- (viii) Life Expectancy – 76.52 (est. 2008)
- (ix) Currency – Peso (\$1=3.07850)
- (x) Per Capita Income - \$13,100
- (xi) Date of Independence – 9th July 1816
- (xii) Government type – Republic
- (xiii) President – Cristina Fernandez De Kircher (since-10 December 2007)

“Argentina is a country occupying most of the southern portion, or southern cone, of South America. With an area of 1,073,399 square miles (2,780,092 square km) – more extensive than Mexico and the U.S. state of Texas combined – it is the eighth largest country in the world. Argentina is shaped like an inverted triangle with its base at the top; it is some 880 miles (1,420 km) across at its widest from east to west and stretches 2,360 miles (3,800 km) from the subtropical north to the subantarctic south. This great north-south length embraces regions of striking diversity, including the Andes Mountains, the thorny scrubland and seasonal swamps of

the Gran Chaco, the broad, fertile plains of the Pampas, the stark tableland of Patagonia, and an undulating Atlantic coastline of some 2,900 miles (4,700 km). Argentina also claims a portion of Antarctica, as well as several islands in the South Atlantic, including the British-ruled Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). It is bounded by Chile to the south and west, Bolivia and Paraguay to the north, and Brazil, Uruguay, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east. Buenos Aires is the capital.

For many foreigners, especially Europeans, Argentina has presented the traditional New World image of a land of romance and opportunity. It received its name, roughly translated as “Land of Silver” or “Silvery One,” from Spanish explorers of the 16th century, who were lured there by rumours of vast mineral wealth. In the 19th century the former colony of Spain was the land of gauchos, the lone horsemen of the Pampas, and of estancieros, ranchers who lived like kings on estancias the size of small countries. In the last part of the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th century, Argentina became for the poor of Europe a place where they could earn a decent living on the expansive farmland of the interior or in the growing cities of the coast. During this period, millions of immigrants came to Argentina, bringing skills that helped transform it into a modern country whose agriculture and industry has remained among the most productive of Latin America.”¹

2. Physical and Human Geography

“Argentina encompasses a variety of major landforms that are often grouped together into four major regions the Andes, the North, the Pampas, and Patagonia. The Andean region extends some 2,300 miles (3,700 km) along the western edge of the country from Bolivia to southern Patagonia, forming most of the natural boundary with Chile. It is commonly subdivided into two parts: the Northwest and the Patagonian Andes. The North is commonly described in terms of its two main divisions: the Gran Chaco, or Chaco, comprising the dry lowlands between the Andes and the Paraná River, and Mesopotamia, an area between the Paraná and Uruguay rivers. The centrally located plains, or Pampas, are grasslands subdivided into arid western and more humid eastern parts called, respectively, the Dry Pampa and the Humid Pampa. Patagonia is the cold, parched, windy region that extends some 1,200 miles (1,900 km) south of the Pampas, from the Colorado River to Tierra del Fuego.”²

(a) Relief

(i) *The Northwest*

“This part of the Andes region includes the northern half of the main mountain mass in Argentina and the transitional terrain, or piedmont, merging with the eastern lowlands. The region’s southern border is the upper Colorado River. Within the region, the Andean system of north-south-trending mountain ranges varies in elevation from 16,000 to 22,000 feet (4,900 to 6,700 metres) and is interrupted by high plateaus (punas) and basins ranging in elevation from about

10,000 to 13,400 feet (3,000 to 4,080 metres). The mountains gradually decrease in size and elevation southward from Bolivia. South America's highest mountain, Aconcagua (22,831 feet [6,959 metres]), lies in the Northwest, together with a number of other peaks that reach over 21,000 feet (6,400 metres). Some of these mountains are volcanic in origin."³

(ii) *The Gran Chaco*

“The western sector of the North region, the Gran Chaco, extends beyond the international border at the Pilcomayo River into Paraguay, where it is called the Chaco Boreal (“Northern Chaco”) by Argentines. The Argentine sector between the Pilcomayo River and the Bermejo River is known as the Chaco Central. Argentines have named the area southward to latitude 30° S, where the Pampas begin, the Chaco Austral (“Southern Chaco”). The Gran Chaco in Argentina descends in flat steps from west to east, but it is poorly drained and has such a challenging combination of physical conditions that it remains one of the least inhabited parts of the nation. It has a subtropical climate characterized by some of Latin America's hottest weather, is largely covered by thorny vegetation, and is subject to summer flooding.”⁴

(iii) *Mesopotamia*

“East of the Gran Chaco, in a narrow depression 60 to 180 miles (100 to 300 km) wide, lies Mesopotamia, which is bordered to the north by the highlands of southern Brazil. The narrow lowland stretches for 1,000 miles (1,600 km) southward, finally merging with the Pampas south of the Río de la Plata. Its designation as Mesopotamia (Greek: “Between the Rivers”) reflects the fact that its western and eastern borders are large rivers, namely the Paraná and Uruguay. The

northeastern part, of this region, Misiones province, between the Alto (“Upper”) Paraná and Uruguay rivers, is higher in elevation.”⁵

(iv) *The Pampas*

“Pampa is a Quechua Indian term meaning “flat surface.” As such it is widely used in southeastern South America from Uruguay, where grass-covered plains commence south of the Brazilian Highlands, to Argentina. In Argentina the Pampas broaden out west of the Río de la Plata to meet the Andean forelands, blending imperceptibly to the north with the Chaco Austral and southern Mesopotamia and extending southward to the Colorado River. The eastern boundary is the Atlantic coastline.”⁶

(v) *Patagonia*

“This region consists of an Andean zone (also called Western Patagonia) and the main Patagonian plateau south of the Pampas, which extends to the tip of South America. The surface of Patagonia descends east of the Andes in a series of broad, flat steps extending to the Atlantic coast. Evidently, the region’s gigantic landforms and coastal terraces were created by the same tectonic forces that formed the Andes, and the coastline is cliffed along its entire length as a result. The cliffs are rather low in the north but tend to rise in the south, where they reach heights of more than 150 feet (45 metres). The landscape is cut by eastward-flowing rivers – some of them of glacial origin in the Andes – that have created both broad valleys and steep-walled canyons.

Patagonia includes a region called the Lake District, which is nestled within a series of basins between the Patagonian

Andes and the plateau. There are volcanic hills in the central plateau west of the city of Río Gallegos. These hills and the accompanying lava fields have dark soils spotted with lighter-colored bunchgrass, creating a leopard-skin effect that intensifies the desolate, windswept appearance of the Patagonian landscape. A peculiar type of rounded gravel called *grava patagónica* lies on level landforms, including isolated mesas. Glacial ice in the past extended beyond the Andes only in the extreme south, where there are now large moraines.”⁷

(b) Drainage

“The largest river basin in the area is that of the Río de la Plata (often called the River Plate). It drains an area of some 1.6 million square miles (4.1 million square km), which includes northern Argentina, the whole of Paraguay, eastern Bolivia, most of Uruguay, and a large part of Brazil. The river is actually an estuary formed by the confluence of the Paraná and Uruguay rivers; its name, meaning “River of Silver,” was coined in colonial times before explorers found that there was neither a single river nor silver upstream from its mouth. Other tributaries of this system are the Iguazú (Iguaçu), Paraguay, Pilcomayo, Bermejo, Salado, and Carcarañá. Above the Iguaçu River’s confluence with the Alto Paraná, it plunges over the escarpment of the Brazilian massif, creating Iguaçu Falls – one of the world’s most spectacular natural attractions.

Aside from the Río de la Plata’s main tributaries, there are few major rivers in Argentina. Wide rivers flow across the Gran Chaco flatlands, but their shallow nature rarely permits navigation, and never with regularity. Moreover, long-lasting summer floods cover vast areas and leave behind ephemeral

swamplands that gradually dry out in winter.

In the Northwest the Desaguadero River and its tributaries in the Andes Mountains water the sandy deserts of Mendoza province. The principal tributaries are the Jáchal, Zanjón, San Juan, Mendoza, Tunuyán, and Diamante. In the northern Pampas, Lake Mar Chiquita, the largest lake in Argentina, receives the waters of the Dulce, Primero, and Segundo rivers but has no outlet. Its name, meaning “Little Sea,” refers to the high salt content of its waters. Rivers that cross Patagonia from west to east diminish in volume as they travel through the arid land. The Colorado and Negro rivers, the largest in the south-central part of the country, produce major floods after seasonal snow and ice melt in the Andes. Farther south, the Santa Cruz River flows eastward out of the glacial Lake Argentino in the Andean foothills before reaching the Atlantic.”⁸

(c) Soils

“Soil types in Argentina range from the light-coloured saline formations of the high puna in the Northwest to the dark, humus-rich type found in the Pampas. Golden-brown loess soils of the Gran Chaco are sometimes lighter where salinity is excessive but turn darker toward the east in the Mesopotamian border zone. These give way to soils ranging from rust to deep red colorations in Misiones. Thick, dark soils predominate in the fertile loess grasslands of the Pampas, but lighter brown soils are common in the drier parts of northern Patagonia. Light tan arid soils of varying texture cover the rest of this region. Grayish podzolic types and dark brown forest soils characterize the Andean slopes.”⁹

(d) Climate

“Argentina lies almost entirely within the temperate zone of the Southern Hemisphere, unlike the rest of the continent to the north, which lies within the tropics. Tropical air masses only occasionally invade the provinces of Formosa and Misiones in the extreme north. The southern extremes of Argentina, which extend to 55° S, also have predominantly temperate conditions, rather than the cold continental climate of comparable latitudes in North America. The South American landmass narrows so markedly toward its southern tip that weather patterns are moderated by the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, and average monthly temperatures remain above freezing in the winter. The temperate climate is interrupted by a long, narrow north-south band of semi-arid to arid conditions and by tundra and polar conditions in the high Andes and in southern portions of Tierra del Fuego.

Precipitation is moderate to light throughout most of the country, with the driest areas in the far northwest and in the southern part of Patagonia. Most rainfall occurs in the northeast, in the Humid Pampa, Mesopotamia, and the eastern Chaco. Windstorms (pamperos) with thunder, lightning, and hail are common. During winter, stationary fronts bring long rainy periods. Dull, gray days and damp weather characterize this season, especially in the Pampas. Between winter storms, tropical air masses make incursions southward and bring mild relief from the damp cold.

Some parts of the Andean Northwest region have an annual average temperature range of more than 36 °F (20 °C), and occasional continental climatic conditions occur. Winter temperatures sometimes fall below freezing on cloudless days and nights.”¹⁰

“The Pampas occupy a transitional area between high summer temperatures to the north and cooler summers to the south. Buenos Aires, located on the northern edge of the Pampas, has a climate similar to that of cities in the southeastern United States, with hot, humid summers and cool, mild winters. The range of mean temperatures for summer months (December to February) is about 72–75 °F (22–24 °C), whereas that for winter months (June to August) is about 46–55 °F (8–13 °C). In the Humid Pampa the rainfall varies from 39 inches (990 mm) in the east to 20 inches (500 mm) in areas near the Andes – about the minimum needed for non-irrigated crops. Cold fronts that move northward from Patagonia, chiefly in July, bring occasional frosts and snow to the Pampas and Mesopotamia. In rare instances a dusting of snow covers Buenos Aires itself.”¹¹

(e) Plant and Animal Life

“Argentina’s fauna and flora vary widely from the country’s mountainous zones to its dry and humid plains and its sub polar regions. In heavily settled regions the makeup of animal and plant life has been profoundly modified.”¹²

(i) *The Northwest*

“Vegetation in the Northwest region includes that of the high Puna Desert, the forested slopes of the Andes, and the subtropical scrub forests of the Pampean Sierras, the latter merging with the deciduous scrub woodlands of the Gran Chaco. Vegetation on the mostly exposed soil of the puna consists of dwarf shrubs and tough grasses, notably bunchgrass; these and other plants in the region are coloured almost as brown as the ground itself. The region is the land

of the guanaco and its near relatives, the llama, alpaca, and vicuña.

Southeast of the Andean region described above, xerophytic (drought-tolerant) scrub forests, called Monte, and intervening grasslands spread across the Pampean Sierras. Vegetation includes species of mimosa and acacia, and there is a smattering of cactus. Hares, skunks, and small deer abound in this part of the Northwest.”¹³

(ii) *The Gran Chaco*

“The western Gran Chaco has growths of thorn forest dominated by algaroba (carob trees) in the drier and often saline zones. Quebracho trees (a source of tannin) are present, but not to the extent that they are farther east. No plants survive in areas with finer salt at the surface. Coarse bunchgrasses are common in the dry steppe, which also supports dense scrub forests intermixed with prickly pear, barrel, and many other types of cactus and trees blend with the steppe areas.

The vegetation of the Chaco becomes increasingly lush toward the east. The thorn forests are gradually replaced by dense quebracho forests (though of a less valuable species than those in the west), and there are some pure stands of algaroba. Some 90 miles (150 km) west of the Paraná River, a few massive trees begin to appear. The rich wildlife of the Chaco includes deer, peccaries, monkeys, tapir, jaguars, pumas, ocelots, armadillos, capybaras, and agoutis. The vast birdlife includes rheas, which are protected by a refuge in the area. Streams harbour numerous fish species, including piranhas, and snakes and reptiles abound.”¹⁴

(iii) Mesopotamia

“Thin stands of tall wax palms occupy the flood zones of Mesopotamia. Groups of trees and grassy areas form a park landscape of noted beauty. Common trees are the quebracho, exploited for its tannin since colonial times, the urunday, and the guayacán, used for tannin and lumber. Gallery forests growing along rivers become denser and taller in Misiones province. Paraná pines appear at higher elevations. Mesopotamia is a habitat for jaguars, monkeys, deer, tapir, peccaries, many snake varieties, and numerous birds, notably toucans and hummingbirds, as well as stingless honeybees.”¹⁵

(iv) The Pampas

“The principal Pampas vegetation is Monte forest in the Dry Pampa and grassland in the Humid Pampa. The boundary between the Dry and Humid Pampas lies approximately along longitude 64° W. Knee-high grasses are found in the most humid areas, whereas to the north, west, and south, where precipitation decreases, tougher grasses give way to the Monte of the Dry Pampa. Planted grains, grasses, and trees have replaced much of the original flora.

Since the time of European settlement, vast herds of cattle, as well as horses, have virtually taken over the areas of the landscape not planted in crops, and many native animal populations have dwindled. Flightless rheas still inhabit the Pampas, but guanacos are no longer found there. Both animals are fleet-footed, which is probably why the Indians developed the bola (boleadora), a device thrown to trip the animals. Small deer, introduced hares, and viscacha, a burrowing rodent, are common.”¹⁶

(v) *Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego*

“Patagonia contains zones of deciduous Andean forests and, east of the Andes, of steppe and desert. The largest area – the steppe region – lies in northern Patagonia between the Colorado River and the port city of Comodoro Rivadavia. This zone represents an extension southward of the monte, which gives way gradually to a xerophytic shrub region without trees except along stream banks. In the extreme west on the Andean border, small stands of araucaria survive, and clumps of wiry grasses are also present. Low scrub vegetation and green grass steppe alternate south of Comodoro Rivadavia to the tip of the continent. Wildlife in the region includes now rare guanacos and rheas, as well as eagles and herons, the Patagonian cavy (mará) and other burrowing rodents, mountain cats and pumas, and various poisonous reptiles.

The coniferous and broad-leaved forests of the Patagonian Andes spread into Chile. Antarctic beech and needle-leaved trees mixed with araucaria are common. The Patagonian Andes do not support a flourishing animal life: the smallest known deer, the pudu, dwells there, and wild pigs, introduced by Europeans, have multiplied.”¹⁷

3. The People

“Heavy immigration, particularly from Spain and Italy, has produced in Argentina a people who are almost all of European ancestry. In the colonial period, though, the Spanish explorers and settlers encountered a number of native peoples. Among these were the Diaguita tribes of the Andean Northwest, a town-dwelling, agricultural people who were forced into labour after they had been conquered. They were divided by the Spanish into small groups and were sent to work in Peru and the Río de la Plata area. In the Mesopotamian region the semi-agricultural Guaraní also were forced into labour.

Most other Argentine Indians were hunters and gatherers who fought the Spanish tenaciously but were eventually exterminated or driven away. In the Gran Chaco were the Guaycuruan-speaking peoples, among others. The Araucanian Indians came over the mountains from Chile and raided Spanish settlements in the southern Pampas until the Conquest of the Desert in the 1870s. Another Pampas Indian tribe was the Querandí, who inhabited the region of Buenos Aires. In Patagonia the largest group was the Tehuelche, and on Tierra del Fuego the Ona.

Population estimates of the colonial period suggest that by 1810 Argentina had more than 400,000 people. Of these perhaps 30 percent were Indian, their numbers drastically depleted from a pre-Columbian regional population estimated at 300,000. Ten percent of the total were black or mulatto, either slaves or descendants of slaves who had been smuggled into the country through Buenos Aires, and there was a large element of mestizos (European and Indian mixture).

European descendants were in the minority.

A great wave of European immigration after the mid-1800s molded the present-day ethnic character of Argentina. The Indians and mestizos were pushed aside (mainly to the Andean provinces) or absorbed, and the blacks and mulattos disappeared, apparently also absorbed into the dominant population. Since that time, mestizos from Chile, Bolivia, and Paraguay have grown numerous in bordering regions, but only since the late 20th century has there been substantial immigration from Paraguay and Uruguay into the urban areas of Argentina.

Almost half of the European immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were Italian, and about one-third were Spanish. Substantial numbers also came from France, Poland, Russia, Germany, and Great Britain. In 1869 the foreign-born made up 12 percent of the population; this grew to about one-third by 1914, and in large cities foreigners outnumbered natives by as much as 2 to 1. As immigration slowed later in the 20th century, the proportion of foreign-born Argentines dropped.

Spanish is the national language, although in Argentina it is spoken in several accents and has absorbed many words from other languages, especially Italian.”¹⁸

4. Cultural Life

(a) Heritage and daily life

“Because almost all Argentines are descendants of immigrants from Europe, their culture has a more distinctly European orientation than that of other Latin Americans. The people of the port of Buenos Aires, the porteños, often call their cultured and glamorous city the Paris of South America. But there is another Argentina away from the capital: that of the Pampas and the interior. The interior gave to all Argentines their symbol of national identity, the gaucho, who occupies a position in South American lore similar to that of the cowboy in the United States. Scorned in his heyday of the 18th and 19th centuries as a drinker and vagabond, this mestizo ranch hand rode the open rangeland of the huge estancias in pursuit of wild horses and criollo cattle. Eventually Argentines came to see him as a character whose solitary life in the open taught him self-reliance, courage, indifference to hardship, and love of the land – traits that represented the ideal of their national character.

Another hybrid is the tango, a music style and dance that emerged from the poor immigrant quarters of Buenos Aires toward the end of the 19th century and quickly became famous around the world as a symbol of Argentine culture. Influenced by the Spanish tango and, possibly, the Argentine milonga, it was originally a high-spirited local phenomenon, but, after it was popularized by such singers as Carlos Gardel, it became an elegant ballroom form characterized by romantic and melancholy tunes.”¹⁹

(b) The Arts

“The fine arts of Argentina historically found their inspiration in Europe, particularly in France and Spain, but the turbulence and complexity of Argentine national life – and of Latin America in general – have also found expression in the arts. In literature the Modernismo movement of the late 19th century and the Ultraísmo of the early 20th were both influenced by the French Symbolist and Parnassian poets. By composing verses of unconventional metre and by using unusual imagery and symbolism, such poets as Leopoldo Lugones and Jorge Luis Borges hoped to draw attention to the beauty of the Spanish language. Borges went on to become one of the most innovative fiction writers of Latin America. He prepared the way for experimental novelists of the later 20th century.

Composers of the early 20th century, such as Alberto Williams and Carlos López Buchardo, contributed to a nationalist revival in music by adapting folk and gaucho themes to classical forms. A generation later Alberto Ginastera and Juan Carlos Paz experimented with musical forms that were current throughout Europe and the Americas. Painters and sculptors studied in Italy and France and brought the academic, Impressionist, and Cubist styles to Argentina. Later artists were inspired by Mexican murals and by abstract and Pop art (Andy Warhol is famous for this) in the United States.”²⁰

(c) Recreation

“The most popular sport among the Argentine working class is football (soccer), introduced by the British (as was polo) in the 19th century. Professional football offers players

of even the poorest backgrounds a chance at wealth and fame; as inspiration they look to such national football stars as Diego Maradona, who was perhaps the world's leading player in the 1980s and '90s. Argentine teams are generally among the best internationally and are often contenders for the World Cup.

Important civic holidays are Venticinco de Mayo (May 25, the anniversary of the revolution) and Nueve de Julio (July 9, Independence Day); Christmas also is a national holiday. Regional festivals include the Fiesta del Milagro in Salta, commemorating the salvation of the city from an earthquake in September 1692, the celebration on July 6 of the founding of Córdoba, and the wine festival in Mendoza in March.”²¹

(d) Press and Broadcasting

“The mass media in Argentina are well advanced among Latin American nations. In Buenos Aires the largest newspapers are published, and many have electronic editions on the Internet.

The majority of radio and television stations are privately operated, although national and provincial governments operate some 15 television stations. Throughout the country's postwar history the broadcast media and press have periodically become agents of state propaganda, only to be returned to some independence by succeeding administrations. This process has also afflicted the press.”²²

5. History

“It has been estimated that the population living in the land area of what is now called Argentina before the arrival of the Europeans totaled some 300,000. As in the rest of the new world, it was composed of Indians believed to have been descendants of Asians who, in prehistoric times, are thought to have migrated across the Bering Strait to the North American continent and who gradually spread across North, South, and Central America. The state of civilization of the Argentine Indians did not match those of the Aztec and the Maya and the empire- building Incas. Some of the tribes, such as those in the Chaco and Patagonia, were nomadic hunters and fishers; but others, such as the Diaguitas of the Northwest and the Araucanians of the Pampa, developed a primitive agriculture, handicrafts, trade, and relatively sophisticated weaponry.”²³

(a) Early period

(i) *Discovery and settlement*

“The main Atlantic outline of Argentina was revealed to European explorers in the early 16th century. The Río de la Plata estuary was discovered years before Ferdinand Magellan traversed the Strait of Magellan in 1520, although historians dispute whether the estuary was first reached by Amerigo Vespucci in 1501–02 or by Juan Díaz de Solís in his ill-fated voyage of 1516. Solís and a small party sailed up the Plata, which he called the Mar Dulce (“Freshwater Sea”), and made landfall. Ambushed by Indians, Solís and most of his followers were killed, and several disappeared. The survivors of the expedition returned to Spain.

The Río de la Plata was not explored again until Magellan arrived in 1520, and Sebastian Cabot in 1526. Cabot discovered the Paraná and Paraguay rivers and established the fort of Sancti Spíritus (the first Spanish settlement in the Plata basin). He also sent home reports of the presence of silver.

In 1528 Cabot met another expedition from Spain under Diego García, commander of a ship from the Solís expedition. Both Cabot and García had planned to sail for the Moluccas but altered their courses, influenced by excited tales about an “enchanted City of the Caesars” (a variant of the Eldorado legend), which later incited many explorations and conquests in Argentina. While Cabot was preparing to search for the fabled city, a surprise attack by the Indians in September 1529 wiped out his Sancti Spíritus base.

Inspired by the conquest of Peru and the threat from Portugal’s growing power in Brazil, Spain in 1535 sent an expedition under Pedro de Mendoza (equipped at his own expense) to settle the country. Mendoza was initially successful in founding Santa María del Buen Aire, or Buenos Aires (1536), but lack of food proved fatal. Mendoza, discouraged by Indian attacks and mortally ill, sailed for Spain in 1537; he died on the way.

In the same year, a party from Buenos Aires under Juan de Ayolas and Domingo Martínez de Irala, lieutenants of Mendoza, pushed a thousand miles up the Plata and Paraguay rivers. Ayolas was lost on an exploring expedition, but Irala founded Asunción (now in Paraguay) among the Guaraní, a largely settled, agricultural people. In 1541 the few remaining inhabitants of Buenos Aires abandoned it and moved to Asunción, which was the first permanent settlement in that

area. In the next half-century Asunción played a major part in the conquest and settlement of northern Argentina. The main population of Argentina was concentrated there until the late 18th century. Buenos Aires, reestablished in 1580 by Juan de Garay with settlers from Asunción, was largely isolated from this northern area. Northern Argentina as well as Buenos Aires was settled mainly by the overflow from the neighbouring Spanish colonies of Chile, Peru, and Paraguay (Asunción). There was little direct migration from Spain, probably because the area lacked the attractions of Mexico, Peru, and other Spanish colonies – rich mines, a large supply of tractable Indian labour, accessibility, and the privilege of direct trade with Spain. Nevertheless, in the early communities a simple but vigorous society developed on the basis of Indian labour and the horses, cattle, and sheep imported by the Spaniards, as well as native products such as corn (maize) and potatoes. Some of the Indians worked as virtual serfs, and densely populated missions (*reducciones*) established by the Roman Catholic church played a notable role in the colonizing process. European men often took Indian wives, because few Spanish women were among the settlers.²²⁴

(ii) Colonial centres

“Politically, Argentina was a divided and subordinate part of the Viceroyalty of Peru until 1776, but three of its cities – San Miguel de Tucumán, Córdoba, and Buenos Aires – successively achieved a kind of leadership in the area and thereby sowed the regional seeds that later grew into an Argentine national identity.

San Miguel de Tucumán’s leadership lasted from the latter part of the 16th through the 17th century. Its political and

ecclesiastical jurisdiction extended over most of northern Argentina, including Córdoba. San Miguel de Tucumán also dominated trade, which was the chief economic activity, by supplying the rich silver-mining area of Upper Peru (now Bolivia) with foodstuffs and livestock in return for European manufactures and other goods brought from Spain. Under the same economic system, Córdoba rose to leadership in the 17th and 18th centuries, because the expansion of settlement gave the city a central location and because the University of Córdoba, founded in 1613, put the city in the intellectual forefront of the region.

Buenos Aires, which rose to leadership in the late 18th century, symbolized the reorientation of Argentina's economic, intellectual, and political life from the west to the east. On the economic front, commerce was oriented away from the declining silver mines of Peru and toward direct transatlantic trade with Europe. Intellectually, interest in the new ideas of the European Enlightenment found fertile soil in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires. Political life was reoriented in 1776, when Spain created the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata (consisting of modern Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and southern Bolivia), with Buenos Aires as its capital. By carving the new viceroyalty from lands formerly part of the Viceroyalty of Peru, Spain intended to put its east-coast dominions in a better defensive position. The chief threat came from Brazil, which was growing rapidly in population, wealth, and military potential. For the first time, the port of Buenos Aires was opened to transatlantic trade with Spain and, through Spain, with other countries. This resulted in a great increase in both legal trade and smuggling.²⁵

(iii) Independence

“In Argentina the independence movement began in 1806–07, when British attacks on Buenos Aires were repelled in the two battles known as the Reconquista and the Defensa. Also important there, as elsewhere in Spanish America, were the ramifications of Napoleon 1’s intervention in Spain, beginning in 1808, which plunged that country into a civil war between two rival governments – one set up by Napoleon, who placed his own brother Joseph Bonaparte on the throne, and the other created by patriotic juntas in Spain in the name of the exiled Ferdinand VII and aided by the British. In most of Spanish America there was general sympathy with the regency, but both claims were rejected, mainly on the ground that an interregnum existed and thus, under ancient principles of Spanish law, the king’s dominions in America had the right to govern themselves pending the restoration of a lawful king.

This view was sustained in Argentina by the Creoles (criollos; Argentine-born Europeans) rather than by the immigrant (“peninsular”) Spaniards, and it was put into effect by the Buenos Aires cabildo, or municipal council. This ancient Spanish institution had existed in all the colonies since the 16th century. Its powers were very limited, but it was the only organ that had given the colonists experience in self-government. In emergencies it was converted into an “open” cabildo, a kind of town meeting, which included prominent members of the community. On May 25, 1810 (now celebrated as Venticinco de Mayo, the day of the revolution), such an open cabildo in Buenos Aires established an autonomous government to administer the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata in the name of Ferdinand VII, pending his restoration. When Ferdinand was restored in 1814, however, he was

virtually powerless in Spain, which remained under the shadow of France. An assembly representing most of the viceroyalty met at San Miguel de Tucumán and on July 9, 1816 (Nueve de Julio), declared the country independent under the name of the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata.

Several years of hard fighting followed before the Spanish royalists were defeated in northern Argentina. But they remained a threat from their base in Peru until it was liberated by José de San Martín and Simón Bolívar in 1820–24. The Buenos Aires government tried to maintain the integrity of the old Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, but the outlying portions, never effectively controlled, soon were lost: Paraguay in 1814, Bolivia in 1825, and Uruguay in 1828. The remaining territory – what now constitutes modern Argentina – was frequently disunited until 1860. The root cause of the trouble, the power struggle between Buenos Aires and the rest of the country, was not settled until 1880, and even after that it continued to cause dissatisfaction.”²⁶

(b) Efforts toward reconstruction, 1820–29

“In 1820 only two political organizations could claim more than strictly local and provincial followings: the revolutionary government in Buenos Aires and the League of Free Peoples, which had grown up along the Río de la Plata and its tributaries under the leadership of José Gervasio Artigas. But both organizations collapsed in that year, and Buenos Aires seemed to be losing its position as the seat of national government. However, as the city regained its function as an intermediary between the nation and foreign governments, it regained its prominence.”²⁷

(i) *Dominance of Buenos Aires*

“By then, military leaders had assumed power in almost every province. Each provincial political regime soon acquired its own character, according to the relative power held by military strongmen (caudillos) and by local political interests. This differentiation was not, however, cause for friction between the provinces; rather, economic and geographic factors separated them. Buenos Aires made significant advances toward national leadership by taking advantage of the interprovincial rivalries.

Within the province of Buenos Aires itself, the regime of the so-called Party of Order instituted popular reforms, including dismantling the military apparatus that had persisted from the war. The remaining armed forces were sent to defend the frontier areas and Pampas against attacks by Indians. This prudence on the part of the government won the support of the rural landowners as well as the urban businessmen, whose backing assured victory at the polls.

The political order that seemed to be taking hold was achieved by setting aside, rather than resolving, certain fundamental difficulties. In particular, the institutional organization of the country was not carried out, and nothing was done about the Banda Oriental (the east bank of the Uruguay River), which was occupied first by Portuguese and then by Brazilian troops. By 1824 both problems were becoming urgent. Britain was willing to recognize Argentine independence, but only if Argentina established a government that could act for the whole country. And in the Banda Oriental a group of eastern patriots had taken over large sectors of the countryside and agitated for their reincorporation into the United Provinces of the Río de la Plata, forcing the Buenos

Aires government to face the possibility of war with the Brazilian empire.”²⁸

(ii) Presidency of Rivadavia

“In the meantime an attempt was made to establish a national government through a constituent assembly that met in December 1824. Overstepping its legal authority, the constituent assembly in February 1826 created the office of president of the republic and installed the porteño (native of Buenos Aires) Bernardino Rivadavia as its first occupant. Civil war flared up in the interior provinces, soon dominated by Juan Facundo Quiroga – a caudillo from La Rioja who opposed centralization. When the assembly finally drafted a national constitution, the major portion of the country rejected it.

Meanwhile, war against Brazil had begun in 1825. The Argentine forces were able to defeat the Brazilians on the plains of Uruguay, but the Brazilian navy blockaded the Río de la Plata and succeeded in crippling Argentine commerce. Rivadavia, unable to end the war on favourable terms, resigned in July 1827, and the national government dissolved. Leadership of the province of Buenos Aires was given to a federalist, Colonel Manuel Dorrego. Dorrego was backed by local interest groups whose political spokesman was the great landowner Juan Manuel de Rosas, who had been named commander of the rural militia. Dorrego made peace with Brazil, and in 1828 the disputed eastern province was constituted as the independent state of Uruguay. The Uruguayan lands, which Rivadavia had considered indispensable to the “national integrity” of **Argentina**, were never to be recovered. In December 1828 troops returning from the war overthrew Dorrego and installed General Juan Lavalle in his place; Dorrego was executed.

Although there was little resistance to the new governor in the city of Buenos Aires, uprisings began promptly in the outlying areas of the province. A convention of provincial representatives met in Santa Fe; dominated by the federalists under Rosas, they called on the governor of Santa Fe to take steps against the Lavalle regime. Lavalle finally came to terms with Rosas, and they agreed to hold elections in Buenos Aires for a new provincial legislature. Under the compromise agreement, Rosas and Lavalle appointed a moderate federalist as governor of Buenos Aires, but political tensions were too great for this attempt at reconciliation. Rosas reconvened the old legislature, which Lavalle had disbanded when he came to power – a triumph for the most intransigent forces of federalism. The legislature unanimously elected Rosas governor on December 5, 1829.”²⁹

(c) Confederation under Rosas, 1829–52

“The regime of Rosas in Buenos Aires enjoyed far broader support than any of its predecessors. Special interest groups, landholders, and export-import merchants (along with the British diplomatic contingent that was identified with these interests) all fell behind the new governor. Practically all the influential sectors in the province identified Rosas’s triumph with their own best interests.”³⁰

(i) Domestic politics

“The new governor saw clearly the ambiguities and dangers of such widespread support, and, although he was identified as a federalist, he ruled as a centralist, with Buenos Aires as his main power base. Rosas manipulated factions of labourers, gauchos, and elites from the estancias and set

himself up as the arbiter of a delicate and constantly threatened balance between the masses and the elites.

By 1832 the opposition to federalism had disappeared throughout the country, and Rosas turned over the reins of the government of Buenos Aires to his legal successor, General Juan Ramón Balcarce. However, Balcarce's assumption of the office fanned sparks of dissidence among those who had pledged to uphold the principles of federalism. Balcarce was overthrown, and his successor took office with a cabinet composed of Rosas's friends. They adopted policies that were designed to lead to political and economic stability, but it was stability that Rosas feared, since it would have entailed the demobilization of his mass political following. The legislature in Buenos Aires was induced to designate Rosas as governor of the province under conditions that Rosas successfully imposed: he was granted extraordinary resources, absolute public authority, and an extension of the governor's term of office from three to five years. Armed with these powers, he soon established a formidable dictatorship, hunting down his real and supposed enemies with the aid of the *Mazorca*, a ruthless secret police force whose members behaved as thugs and vigilantes. To show their loyalty, citizens were required to wear red favours, and priests to display Rosas's portrait on the altars of their churches."³¹

(ii) Foreign policies

“Rosas's foreign policies left no room for anything other than total success or total failure, and international difficulties arose as extensions of domestic turmoil. In January 1833 Britain reasserted an earlier claim to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas), and a British warship took possession of the

islands. More troublesome was the growing independence of neighbouring Bolivia, Paraguay, and Uruguay, which continued to pursue their destinies as independent states rather than as parts of a Buenos Aires-controlled federation. General Andrés de Santa Cruz, who had established a confederation of Peru and Bolivia, supported opponents of Rosas's in Argentina. Rosas in turn aided the influential governor of the northern province of Tucumán when that governor decided to go to war against Santa Cruz's confederation. The northern Argentine forces, in alliance with Chile and Peruvian nationalist rebels, were victorious in 1839.

Rosas's involvement in a trade dispute with Uruguay, however, proved to be costly and ended in failure. It contributed to the first open friction with France, which sent warships to blockade Buenos Aires in 1838. This caused dissension in the coastal region, which depended heavily on export trade. Argentine political exiles in Montevideo, Uruguay, received French backing in their efforts to overthrow Rosas, and in the north a league of dissident provinces was formed.

This formidable coalition of adversaries soon fell apart. France, faced with other problems, abandoned its adventure in the Río de la Plata area and left its local allies to fend for themselves against Rosas. At the same time, an army organized in Buenos Aires and commanded by Manuel Oribe (the deposed second president of Uruguay) gained control of most of the Argentine interior. For the first time since 1820, troops from Buenos Aires had advanced as far as the Bolivian and Chilean frontiers. The hegemony of Buenos Aires under Rosas's system of federalism was not to be challenged again. Oribe went on to conquer most of Uruguay, and his

predominantly Argentine army began a nine-year siege of Montevideo in February 1843. The city was supplied through the intervention of British warships, and in 1845 an Anglo-French fleet blockaded Buenos Aires while a British fleet sailed up the Paraná River. Eventually the British and French withdrew their aid to Montevideo and ceased hostilities with Rosas.

The fact that Rosas was able to conduct a vigorous foreign policy for so many years was partly because of the weakness of Argentina's natural rival in the Río de la Plata area, Brazil, which had been involved in a civil war (1835–45) in Rio Grande do Sul. Once the rebellion was put down, it was only a question of time until Brazil again influenced the Río de la Plata region. This influence opposed Rosas, and it worked in support of a rebellion by General Justo José de Urquiza, governor of the province of Entre Ríos. In 1851 Urquiza formed an alliance with Brazil and Uruguay. The allies first forced Rosas's troops to abandon the siege of Montevideo and then defeated his main army in the Battle of Caseros (February 3, 1852), just outside Buenos Aires. Rosas, abandoned by most of his troops as well as his political supporters, escaped to England, where he died in 1877."³²

(d) National consolidation, 1852–80

“General Urquiza called a constitutional convention that met in Santa Fe in 1852. Buenos Aires refused to participate, but the convention adopted a constitution for the whole country that went into effect on May 25, 1853. Buenos Aires recoiled from the new confederation, the first elected president of which was Urquiza and the first capital of which was Paraná. The porteño dissidence was a serious financial

handicap to the state, since Buenos Aires kept for itself all the revenues from customs duties on imports. In 1859 Urquiza incorporated Buenos Aires by armed force, but he also agreed to a constitutional revision that underscored the federal character of the government.

Before the unification took effect, however, Urquiza was succeeded in the presidency by Santiago Derqui. Another civil war broke out, but this time Buenos Aires defeated Urquiza's forces. Urquiza and General Bartolomé Mitre, governor of Buenos Aires, then agreed that Mitre would lead the country but that Urquiza would exercise authority over the provinces of Entre Ríos and Corrientes. Derqui resigned, and Mitre was elected president in 1862; Buenos Aires became the seat of government.

The authority of the new president was progressively weakened by opposition within his own province of Buenos Aires. The pressures of this opposition forced Mitre to intervene in the political struggles of Uruguay and then to fight Paraguay in the War of the Triple Alliance. From 1865 to 1870 an alliance of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay carried on a devastating campaign against Paraguay, employing modern weapons and tens of thousands of troops.

The war with Paraguay did not disrupt Argentina's commerce, as other wars had. In the 1860s and '70s foreign capital and waves of European immigrants poured into the country. Railroads were built; alfalfa, barbed wire, new breeds of cattle and sheep, and finally the refrigeration of meat were introduced.

The national armed forces became one of the cornerstones of the new centralized state; however, the army refused to uphold the policies of the president. One of Rosas's

nephews rallied the support of the military behind the presidential candidacy of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, a native of San Juan. His victory was guaranteed by the influence of the military combined with the support of a liberal faction in Buenos Aires that opposed Mitre, and the new president (1868–74) held office without a political party of his own. Credit from abroad fortified the economy, moreover, allowing Sarmiento to engage in a costly civil war to put down an uprising in Entre Ríos.

The next president, Nicolás Avellaneda (1874–80), was a native of San Miguel de Tucumán who had been Sarmiento's minister of justice, public education, and worship. Avellaneda's government faced serious financial difficulties engendered by the European economic crisis of 1873. Argentina defaulted on foreign loans and completed few public works projects, but it encouraged European immigration, largely into Patagonia, and it fully supported the Indian wars.

General Julio Argentino Roca, who was also from San Miguel de Tucumán and who had influence in Córdoba, became the next president (1880–86). Roca had led a brilliant military career that included directing the Conquest of the Desert, the campaign that brought the Indian wars to a victorious close in 1879. This opened the southern and western Pampas and the northern reaches of Patagonia to settlement, and it made Roca a political hero. His campaign for the presidency provoked a new rebellion in Buenos Aires, but the uprising was quickly suppressed. The perennial question of the city's status was then settled by making it a federal territory and converting it into the national capital; a new capital for the province of Buenos Aires was established at La Plata.²³³

(e) The conservative regime, 1880–1916

The entire country was now dominated by the National Autonomist Party, which had originally supported Avellaneda's candidacy and was now an alliance of the various groups supporting Roca. These included many of the big ranchers, as well as commercial and business interests who were more than happy with Roca's formula of "peace and efficient administration." Argentina's economy grew rapidly during this period, largely owing to British capital, which made it possible to build an extensive rail network from the upriver provinces to Buenos Aires and the sea. The new rail system facilitated the export of meat and other agricultural products, and ranching and farming thus became more profitable. Large-scale foreign investment sparked the expansion of other industries as well.

In addition, the population grew rapidly during this era, from less than two million in 1869 to nearly eight million in 1914. In 1881 Argentina and Chile agreed to delimit their Andean frontier, including partitioning Tierra del Fuego. Argentina was to have exclusive rights to the Atlantic waters, and Chile to the Pacific.

(i) *The crisis of 1890*

"The economic expansion led ultimately to inflation, the issuance of too much paper currency, and the onset of a financial crisis. A political crisis also followed. The government of Roca's successor, Miguel Juárez Celman (1886–90), had avoided launching an unpopular anti-inflationary program, but this inaction sparked criticism both within and outside the official party ranks. In July 1890 a revolt erupted that had strong support from within the army, but it was

defeated by loyal elements. Even so, Juárez Celman was forced to step down in favour of the vice president, Carlos Pellegrini (1890–92), a solid ally of Roca.”³⁴

(ii) *The rise of radicalism*

“A new party, the Radical Civic Union, was formed in response to the difficulties of the 1890s. It was strongly opposed to the ruling regime and to the compromise candidate, Luis Sáenz Peña, who was accepted in 1892 by Mitre and the more moderate opponents of the Roca–Juárez Celman regime. Sáenz was in turn replaced in 1895 by José Evaristo Uriburu. In 1898 Roca returned to the presidency for a second term and attempted to bring the more moderate radicals back into the loose alliance of local political groups, which after 1890 had controlled the national government. The most intransigent radical factions remained in opposition; they were headed by Hipólito Irigoyen, who later served twice as president.

While political opposition declined, social unrest was becoming more widespread, and there was growing disarray within the government itself. Roca broke with Pellegrini, and the National Autonomist Party suffered because of the split. In 1904 Roca was barely able to avoid being succeeded in office by Pellegrini; moreover, the candidate Roca finally put into the presidency, Manuel Quintana, was not one of Roca’s staunchest supporters. Quintana was forced to quell a radical revolution in 1905, and he died the following year. His death opened the way to the presidency for José Figueroa Alcorta, a Cordoban who turned immediately to the task of destroying Roca’s political machine. In 1910 Alcorta installed as his successor Roque Sáenz Peña, a brilliant politician who was

fully prepared to construct a governing coalition on new foundations.

The course of Argentine politics in the final stages of Roca's career had convinced many of his most influential and militant followers that the country needed electoral reform. These reforms were not seen as excessively dangerous, since the Radical opposition seemed to have limited support. In 1912 President Sáenz Peña had the Congress pass an electoral-reform law that called for a compulsory, secret ballot for all male citizens. His death in 1914 deprived the national leadership of its guiding force, and the electoral law he had authored opened the gates of power to the Radicals. The interim presidency of Victorino de la Plaza (1914–16) was followed by that of the Radical leader Hipólito Irigoyen (1916–22). He was the first Argentine president who owed his victory to the popular vote rather than to selection by the incumbent president from the members of a ruling oligarchy.”³⁵

(f) The radical regime and the conservative restoration 1916–43

“The Radical front was a coalition of heterogeneous social groups, whose competing interests slowed the passage of reforms, despite urgent calls for economic and social change. Not surprisingly, Irigoyen preferred to concentrate on the political ills he had inherited from the conservative regime. The most urgent measure involved political patronage, which had been used by the conservatives to keep their candidates in office. Patronage shifted to the service of the Radicals, who created a new political machine that was virtually unbeatable at the polls in almost every province.

In other fields also the Radical administration attempted

to expand its political base. Irigoyen achieved substantial rapport with the more moderate labour unions – a rapport expressed in a generally pro-labour policy. That policy was tempered after violent clashes occurred in the capital city during the general strike of January 1919, which caused the military to align itself with conservative interest groups. His administration supported organizations and movements among tenant farmers and also put through a university-reform plan.

Irigoyen's influence was a deciding factor in the election of his successor, Marcelo T. de Alvear (1922–28), who represented a safe choice. He was not content, however, with the restrictions that Irigoyen imposed upon him, and he reluctantly led a conservative wing hostile to Irigoyen. In the elections of 1928, Irigoyen ran for a second term and was elected by a margin of two to one, establishing him as head of his party.

Irigoyen was not a revolutionary, but his victory over the economic, social, and political elites of the country nonetheless earned him their enmity. His political machine, though an excellent mechanism for securing power, proved to be incapable of governing during times of economic distress, such as late 1929, the eve of the Great Depression. Behind the nation's economic growth lay a shift in economic power from the Argentine landowning class to foreign merchants and processors. Before 1914 these foreign interests had been concentrated mainly in the grain-growing sector, but after 1920 they moved into the cattle-raising industry. Private investment still came primarily from Great Britain, which was also the main market for Argentine exports. The United States provided industrial and transportation

equipment and was the government's principal source of credit, but it had erected tariff and other barriers to the importation of Argentine goods, prompting Irigoyen to adopt an anti-U.S. and pro-British line."³⁶

Irigoyen's government could not cope with the onset of the global depression, and the army expelled him from office in September 1930. This marked the end of a constitutional continuity that had lasted for 68 years; it was also the end of a long period of economic expansion based on the export of raw materials.

During the next 13 years, which have often been termed "the Infamous Decade," the armed forces sponsored a conservative restoration. After expelling Irigoyen, they installed General José Félix Uriburu in the presidency (1930–32). Uriburu was a descendent of an old, conservative northern family, and he leaned toward fascism. His influence with the army, however, was not as great as that of General Agustín Pedro Justo, a former minister of war under Alvear, who favoured a gradual conservative reorientation of the country. The Radicals, who had been reorganized under the leadership of Alvear, won an unexpected victory in trial elections held in the province of Buenos Aires in April 1931, but the Radicals' activities were then severely restricted (including the arrest or exile of their leaders), and their members either boycotted or were barred from the national election of 1931. General Justo, in contrast, had the backing of the Concordancia (a coalition of conservatives, a faction of the Radicals, and independent socialists), and, with only limited electoral fraud, he was elected by a large majority.

"The new president, facing a difficult economic situation, instituted several controversial reforms and initiatives. In 1933

he signed the Roca-Runciman Agreement with Great Britain, which guaranteed Argentina a fixed share in the British meat market and eliminated tariffs on Argentine cereals. In return, Argentina agreed to restrictions with regard to trade and currency exchange, and it preserved Britain's commercial interests in the country. Many Argentines saw the treaty as a sellout to Britain, although from the British point of view the pact accorded privileges not given to any other country outside their empire. Other unpopular reforms included restructuring the monetary system and establishing agencies to control exports. After 1935 the economic climate improved.

The election of 1937, in which the government retained its power, was marked by fraud and violence; however, the next president, Roberto M. Ortiz, returned to more proper electoral procedures, calling for federal intervention in the province of Buenos Aires, where a corrupt conservative machine had been in control. Ortiz's poor health obliged him to resign in 1940, and his successor, Ramón S. Castillo, restored the conservative coalition to power and gained the support of General Justo.

At the outbreak of World War II, Argentina declared its neutrality and remained neutral even after the United States entered the conflict in 1941. Castillo's motives for this stance were largely economic, and he attempted to court trade agreements with both the United States and the Axis powers while maintaining a significant commerce with Britain; however, his policies were only partly successful, and Argentina struggled to arm and equip its military while other Latin American nations received generous lend-lease shipments from the United States. In the face of opposition from both pro-Allied and pro-Axis groups, as well as concerns over the

increasing strength of the United States-supplied Brazilian military, Castillo imposed a state of siege. General Justo died in January 1943, leaving the president without his most influential supporter, and Castillo was overthrown in June.”³⁷

(g) The Perón era, 1943–55

“The military government faced several urgent and difficult problems, including the decision of whether to remain neutral or choose sides in the war. It also had to decide between the restoration of a representative system and the installation of a long-term military dictatorship. General Arturo Rawson was made president but resigned after two days when his anticonservative stance and his advocacy of the United Nations won no military support.

General Pedro P. Ramírez replaced Rawson as president. He maintained neutrality in the war but faced increasing opposition from all political groups except the nationalist right wing and the fascist sympathizers. The government, reflecting an emergent authoritarianism, censored the press and dissolved political parties. Under pressure from the United States, the regime broke off diplomatic relations with Germany, but this deed was not favoured by many military officers, and Ramírez was removed by a coup. The presidency was turned over to General Edelmiro J. Farrell (1944–46), who led a military junta, but, under threat of international sanctions, his regime prepared for a return to representative democracy.

The search for a solution ended in the rise of Colonel Juan Perón to the office of president. From 1941 Perón had led the United Officers Group (Grupo de Oficiales Unidos; GOU), a secret military lodge that had engineered the 1943

coup. In October 1943 he secured the minor job of running the labour department and began building a political empire based in the labour unions. He helped the unions win favourable settlements from employers and pushed through a welfare program that provided vacations, retirement benefits, and severance pay. By 1945 Perón was also vice president and minister of war. His changes included giving autonomy to universities, reconstructing political parties (including the Communist Party, prohibited since 1936), and declaring war on Germany, thereby facilitating Argentina's admittance to the United Nations. But with the return of political freedom came renewed opposition, culminating in a mass demonstration in Buenos Aires in September 1945. Emergency measures were enacted. Seizing the opportunity, Perón's enemies in the navy reacted, and he was removed from office and arrested on October 9. At that point, however, Perón's adversaries in the military and the political sphere failed to agree on a further course of action. Perón's adherents in the unions organized a strike that found enthusiastic support among the people. He was released on October 17 – a date still celebrated by Peronists as Loyalty Day – and his foes were forced to resign.

Perón campaigned for the presidency in the elections of 1946. He organized the Labour Party, which was resisted by all the old parties and by the major vested-interest groups. His victory, though narrow, gave him control of both houses of Congress and all the provincial governorships. Perón's political strategy and tactics were authoritarian and personalistic. He politically "purified" the schools and courts, declared a state of internal war in order to expand his executive authority, redistributed revenues in favour of the workers, nationalized public services, and gave preferential

treatment to urban and industrial areas over their rural counterparts. He rewarded the organized workers for their support by enforcing labour legislation, improving wages and working conditions, controlling rents, and introducing the aguinaldo (13th-month bonus). Perón was a charismatic figure who spoke to working people in a language that they could understand. His appeal among the descamisados (underprivileged workers) was reinforced and further dramatized by his wife, Eva Duarte de Perón (Evita), who unofficially led the Department of Social Welfare and presided over an extraordinary distribution of money, apartments, and jobs.

Until 1949 Perón's economic policies were successful, largely because exporters were so successful during and just after the war. However, as inflation increased and trade became less profitable, it became more difficult to finance imports of vital raw materials. The constitutional reform of 1949 allowed Perón to be reelected in 1951, but his next government took on a more conservative hue, hastened by the death of his wife in July 1952. Evita had become a powerful political figure in her own right, burnishing the regime's image of popular democracy, although she had been obliged by the military to rescind her acceptance of the vice-presidential nomination in 1951. After 1952 Perón incurred the increasing hostility of the church and the students. His efforts to eliminate the political influence of the church provoked disaffection in the officer corps, and in September 1955 he was overthrown by General Eduardo Lonardi and fled the country.³⁸

(h) Attempts to restore constitutionalism, 1955–66

“Lonardi recognized the strength of Peronism and sought

a compromise, but he was displaced in November 1955 by General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu. The new administration was a military dictatorship that sought to restore constitutional government. Taking a fiercely anti-Peronist stance, it dissolved Perón's old party and placed the labour unions under state administration. The Peronists wielded considerable influence on the factions that were competing for power, and in 1958 they supported Arturo Frondizi, a Radical leader who promised to readmit them to political life in return for their support. Frondizi won the presidency and majorities in both houses of Congress.

President Frondizi focused on economic development and showed a keen interest in reviving the flow of foreign investment. He devalued the currency to favour exporters and foreign investors; however, this had adverse effects on the middle and lower classes. Rapidly accelerating inflation and the campaign against it brought restrictions on credit, increasing the difficulties of industry, and Frondizi had to use the military to uphold his unpopular policies.

In March 1962 the reorganized Peronists gained control of important districts, among them the province of Buenos Aires. The armed forces withdrew support from Frondizi, dissolved Congress, and set up a government in the name of José María Guido, president pro tempore of the Senate. Guido's 18-month administration was one of confusion, as two military factions fought for control. The Colorados ("Reds") sought a dictatorship that would deal strongly with the Peronists and extreme leftists. The Azules ("Blues"), who prevailed, favoured a constitutional government by a coalition including the Peronists, who would be confined to a weaker role than that indicated by their voting strength.

The elections of July 1963 resulted in victory for Arturo Illia, the candidate of the Radical Civic Union. President Illia inherited Frondizi's economic problems, although the drastic reorientation of the economy had begun to show signs of success. Illia tried without success to split the resurgent Peronists, who now controlled the labour unions, from their exiled leader. The antagonized Peronists supported a coup in June 1966 that brought to power General Juan Carlos Onganía, a former Azul leader and commander in chief of the army.”³⁹

(i) Government of the armed forces 1966–73

“Adalbert Krieger Vasena, minister of economy and labour, attempted to stabilize the economy by again devaluing the currency and then undertaking programs in electric power, steel, roads, and housing. In May 1969 disturbances and riots in the cities of Corrientes, Rosario, and particularly Córdoba rose out of student and labour conflicts; these incidents, later known as the Cordobazo, were identified as resentment toward Krieger Vasena's economic policies. Krieger Vasena was removed, but the Onganía administration was unable to agree on an alternative economic policy, and the Cordobazo decisively affected the political climate. Underground activities were organized by a Trotskyite group, the People's Revolutionary Army (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo; ERP), and by Peronist groups. In 1970 one of these Peronist organizations, the Montoneros, destroyed the moderate Peronist union leadership and captured and killed former president Aramburu, who had been organizing a movement for a return to constitutional rule. The armed forces overthrew the Onganía government in June 1970. General Roberto Marcelo Levingston replaced Onganía, but inflation returned

and terrorist acts increased; Levingston was overthrown in March 1971 and replaced by General Alejandro Agustín Lanusse, who promised to reestablish democratic elections by the end of 1973.

Perón had supported the Peronist underground but also used other means in a new bid for power. He maintained a formal alliance with the Frondizi followers, but the cornerstone of his strategy was an understanding with the largest non-Peronist party, the Radicals. In addition, he was mindful of the Argentine elites' vested interests, and he purged his economic proposals of any motives that could alarm the propertied classes. The military government prevented Perón's own candidacy but could not stop the electoral victory of the Peronist coalition, the Justicialist Liberation Front (*Frente Justicialista de Liberación*; *Frejuli*), in March 1973.²⁴⁰

(j) The return of Peronism

“The newly elected president, Héctor J. Cámpora, took office in May 1973. It was immediately clear that he was merely preparing the way for the return of Perón from exile. Tensions rose sharply among Peronists as the organization's left wing fought with its right-wing Montoneros for influence. At the final return of Perón in June, there was a pitched battle between right and left at Ezeiza International Airport. The union leadership and José López Rega, an associate of Perón, launched a violent antileftist campaign through a death squad organization, the Argentine Anticommunist Alliance (AAA, or Triple A), which had the discreet support of Perón himself. In July Cámpora resigned, and new elections were presided over by another interim president, Raúl Lastiri, who began a purge of leftist influences in the government.”²⁴¹

(k) The return of military government**(i) *The Videla regime and the Dirty War***

Five days after the coup a three-man military junta filled the presidency with Lieutenant General Jorge Rafael Videla. The junta closed Congress, imposed censorship, banned trade unions, and brought state and municipal government under military control. Meanwhile Videla initiated the infamous Process of National Reorganization, known subsequently as the “Guerra Sucia” (“Dirty War”), in which some 13,000–15,000 citizens were killed, often following their imprisonment and torture. The Argentine government, which maintained that it was fighting a civil war, initially faced little public opposition, but this began to change in the late 1970s, with growing evidence of civil rights violations. The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who lost children to the Dirty War, began calling international attention to the plight of the desaparecidos (“disappeared persons”) through weekly Thursday afternoon vigils in the Plaza de Mayo, fronting the presidential palace. A particularly vocal critic of both left- and right-wing violence was Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, who was arrested and tortured in 1977 and received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1980. For the most part, however, opposition was choked off by rigorous censorship, strict curfews, and fear of the secret police.

During this period the economy continued to lag. A civilian from an old family, José Martínez de Hoz, became economy minister, but, keen as he was to deregulate the economy, the armed forces were equally determined to keep control. Annual inflation dropped in 1976–82 from about 600 to 138 percent – a more manageable but still distended level.

Argentina's balance of foreign trade initially improved, but by 1980 the overvalued peso devastated Argentine industry, while uncontrolled spending plunged the country into debt.

(ii) *Galtieri and the Falklands War*

“Videla was succeeded in March 1981 by General Roberto Viola, who, with the Dirty War near its end, was quite unable to control his military allies. In December he was shouldered aside by Lieutenant General Leopoldo Galtieri. Galtieri faced a slumping economy and increased civil opposition to military rule. His trump card was that he had promised his navy ally, Vice Admiral Jorge Anaya, that they could fulfill Argentina's historic claims to the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas) by armed force.

Nationalist sentiment over the Falklands had been precipitated in 1977, when Argentina's claim to another archipelago – the three Beagle Channel islands – was refused by the International Court of Justice in favour of Chile. (In 1979 the matter had again gone into negotiation, this time under Vatican auspices, and in 1984 Chile was awarded sovereignty.) In February 1982 Argentina increased pressure on the United Kingdom to relinquish the Falkland Islands. With popular support at home, Argentine troops landed on the Falklands and South Georgia island in early April, overcame the British Royal Marines stationed there, and raised the Argentine flag. For the next three weeks, while a British naval force sailed to the Falklands, the two belligerents failed to negotiate a solution. British forces retook South Georgia on April 25. A successful amphibious landing on San Carlos Water, Falkland Sound, followed, and after a brief land campaign the Argentine military governor surrendered the

islands on June 14. (See also Falkland Islands War.)

Galtieri resigned as commander in chief of the army and president three days later. General Reynaldo Bignone was installed as president on July 1. The members of the junta representing the air force and the navy resigned in protest over Bignone's appointment, but the junta was reconstituted on September 10. Under Bignone, political parties were allowed to resume activities, and general elections were announced; meanwhile, elements of the armed forces worked to conceal evidence of crimes committed during the Dirty War. The Peronist party delayed choosing a presidential candidate and thus lost ground to the Radical Civic Union, led by Raúl Alfonsín, a civilian lawyer who had courageously defended victims of the military regime. Alfonsín won the election on October 30, 1983, and the Radicals gained a majority over the Peronists in the national Congress."⁴²

(I) Restoration of democracy

“Soon after his inauguration in December 1983, Alfonsín reversed legislation passed under Bignone by announcing plans to prosecute several members of the defunct military government, including former presidents Videla, Viola, and Galtieri. He also repealed a law granting amnesty to those accused of crimes and human rights violations during the Dirty War, and hundreds of military personnel were prosecuted. In the trial of nine former junta members in 1985, five were convicted, including Videla and Viola. Galtieri was acquitted in that trial but convicted in 1986, along with two other officers, of incompetency in the Falkland Islands War. Rebellion broke out within the military in the spring of 1987, but most of the armed forces stayed loyal. Massive rallies

voiced approval of Alfonsín's democracy, and the international community expressed support.

Alfonsín launched the Austral Plan, an austerity program that implemented a new currency (the austral), wage and price controls, and currency devaluations. The measures initially brought down inflation and restored the confidence of international bankers. Argentina then restructured its foreign debts, which had reached crisis proportions. The inflation rate began to rise again, however, reaching almost 388 percent annually at the end of 1988, and the austral began a precipitous decline in value against the U.S. dollar.

There were more rebellions in the last months of Alfonsín's tenure, as the military remained discontented over wages, inadequate equipment, and the trials of its members stemming from the Dirty War. The military's hand was strengthened after insurgents carried out a bloody attack on a barracks outside Buenos Aires, and Alfonsín was forced to accept a military role in policy and to initiate a huge defense spending program.

Although Alfonsín remained personally popular, he was constitutionally ineligible to succeed himself. His government's poor handling of the economy contributed to the defeat of the Radical presidential candidate, Eduardo Angeloz, in May 1989. Instead, Carlos Saúl Menem, the Peronist former governor of La Rioja, led his coalition to victory in the presidential and congressional elections. Throughout the campaign Menem had cultivated an image recalling Perón, and it was his appeal to the poor and working classes, the traditional supporters of Peronism, that clinched his victory.

With the economy crumbling around him, Alfonsín resigned five months early, and Menem officially took over in

July. Menem's moderate Peronist program called for a free-market economy with lower tariffs, based on a wage-price pact between labour, business, and government. To help carry out his economic scheme, Menem unexpectedly enlisted the aid of former top-level executives from Bunge y Born, one of Argentina's leading corporations.

Menem, in turn, needed military support in a time of economic emergency, and he sought to draw a veil over the past by pardoning those accused of human rights violations. Criticism of this act was strong but somewhat tempered by the fact that Menem himself had been held in detention for five years. Former president Galtieri also was pardoned. Meanwhile, in October 1989 Argentina and Great Britain formally agreed to establish full diplomatic relations, while quietly sidestepping the question of Falklands sovereignty.

Initially, Menem was no more successful than his predecessor in tackling the economy, as inflation continued unchecked. The situation changed in 1991, when Domingo Cavallo was appointed economy minister. Cavallo implemented a far-reaching program of economic stabilization, as well as measures to enhance revenue collection and prevent tax evasion. In March a revaluation of the austral was approved, and by August inflation had fallen to 1.5 percent, the lowest rate in 17 years. The government then privatized numerous state-owned businesses and introduced a new currency. Capital flight was reversed, and in 1992 Argentina emerged with a reformed and apparently stable economy.

In 1993 the ruling Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista, or PJ; Menem's Peronist party) launched a campaign for a constitutional amendment that would permit the president to

run for a second term. In elections held in October, the PJ gained a majority in the Chamber of Deputies but still needed support from the Radicals to change the constitution. Former president Alfonsín eventually consented to support the reforms, in an agreement called the Olivos Pact. The new constitution, promulgated in 1994, had few changes apart from the provision for consecutive presidential terms.

Menem decisively won reelection in 1995. The beginning of his second four-year term was overshadowed by the impact of the “Tequila Crisis” (the abrupt devaluation of the Mexican peso) and by increasing disagreements with Cavallo over economic policy. In addition, the government’s popularity was eroded by high unemployment and accusations of corruption, yet the president’s political control remained strong. When Menem finally dismissed Cavallo in July 1996, the economy was unaffected. Abroad, the foreign minister Guido di Tella negotiated an agreement with Chile regarding the delineation of their southern borders, and in October 1998 Menem paid a state visit to the United Kingdom. Commercial flights were resumed between the Falkland Islands and the Argentine mainland in 1999. Later that year Fernando de la Rúa was elected president, leading an alliance of parties to victory over the Peronists. At the beginning of the 21st century, Argentina continued to face economic challenges, but its democratic institutions remained strong.⁷⁴³

6. The Economy

“Argentina’s economy is one of the richest and most diversified in Latin America. The nation has a variety of natural and other resources which have combined to produce an economy that is based on a strong industrial base, an export oriented agricultural sector, and a growing service sector. However, after repeated periods of military dictatorship, the nation faced a variety of economic problems when the first sustained period of civilian control of government began in 1983. By 1989, the nation had an enormous external debt, and inflation had reached a level of 200% per month. In response, the government undertook a variety of programs to reform and reinvigorate the economy. In 1991, it initiated a series of programs which provided a fixed exchange rate between the peso and the U.S. dollar and ultimately reformed the banking system. In addition, the currencies of Argentina’s major trading partners in Europe and Brazil depreciated relative to the Argentina peso. This effective appreciation of the peso led to deterioration in Argentina’s competitiveness, which, along with higher interest rates, further held back economic growth. In 2003, import substitution policies and soaring exports, coupled with lower inflation and expansive economic measures, triggered a surge in the GDP. This was repeated in 2004 and 2005, creating millions of jobs and encouraging internal consumption. The situation by 2006 was further improved. The economy grew 8.8% in 2003, 9.0% in 2004, 9.2% in 2005, and 2006 was on the same track, 8.5% in 2007, 8.7% in 2008 (predictions are in 8.5% and 9.0%), though inflation, estimated at around 10 to 12%, has become an issue again, and income distribution is still considerably unequal.”⁴⁴

(a) Resources

“Argentine industry is well served by the country’s abundance of energy resources. By the late 20th century the country was self-sufficient in fossil fuels and hydroelectric generation, and it had become a petroleum exporter. Oil deposits are scattered throughout the country.

While most of the country’s power has traditionally been derived from petroleum, there has also been emphasis on the need to develop other energy resources. It has been estimated that half of the country’s energy reserves lie in the potential of its rivers. Power from hydroelectric projects was increased by 10 times in the 1970s, and plans for the completion of more projects have been made. Such plans also involve the greater realization of abundant natural gas supplies and the production of nuclear energy, the latter being an area in which Argentina, with several nuclear plants, is a Latin-American leader. The main natural gas fields are in the Northwest, near Campo Durán (Salta province) and Mendoza, and in Patagonia, near Neuquén and Comodoro Rivadavia. Prior to the development of these fields in the 1980s, Argentina had imported gas from Bolivia. Argentina mines some coal, but most of its needs are met by imports; the chief coal deposits are in southern Patagonia.”⁴⁵

(b) Agriculture, forestry, and fishing

“Argentina is one of the world’s major exporters of soybeans and wheat, as well as meat. It is also one of the largest producers of wool and wine, but most of its wine is consumed domestically. Wheat is Argentina’s largest crop in harvested land area, and it is the main crop in the cattle-raising southern Pampas of Buenos Aires and La Pampa provinces.

Wheat and corn (maize) dominate in the north.

About half of the corn produced is used for livestock feed. The total area of the Pampas planted in sorghum and soybeans has grown since 1960 to rank just behind that of wheat and corn. These crops also serve primarily as livestock feed and are valuable for export. Another crop of the northern Pampas is flax.

More than nine-tenths of the country's grapes are planted in the Northwest provinces of Mendoza and San Juan; most of the crop is used for wine making. Table grapes are a specialty in La Rioja. The warmer northern provinces of Tucumán, Salta, and Jujuy make up the sugarcane-growing region of Argentina.

As the source of the country's most valuable export commodity, beef cattle dominate the Pampa. Estancieros have proved quick to adapt to changing markets, switching breeds and supplementing alfalfa feed with grain sorghum in order to produce leaner meat. Most of Argentina's hogs are raised in the Pampas, principally for domestic consumption.

The forestry industry does not supply all of Argentina's needs. Most of the harvest is used for lumber, with smaller amounts for firewood and charcoal. In Mesopotamia the Paraná pine is harvested for its timber; there are also plantations of poplar and willow. The Northwest highlands produce pine and cedar, used for pulp and industry. The red quebracho of the Chaco region is valuable for its tannin, and the white quebracho is used for lumber and charcoal. Scattered stands of algaroba (carob) provide local firewood and cabinet wood in the Pampas.

The fishing industry is comparatively small, owing in part to the overwhelming preference among Argentines for beef

in their diet. Most coastal and deep-sea fishing is done in the Buenos Aires area, from the Río de la Plata to the Gulf of San Matías; the major ports are Mar del Plata and Bahía Blanca. Hake, squid, and shrimp make up a large part of the catch, about three-quarters of which is frozen or processed into oil and fish meal for export.”⁴⁶

(c) Industry

“Cordoba is Argentina’s major industrial centre. It is the centre of metal working, especially for motor vehicle production. Argentina’s other principal industrial enterprises are heavily concentrated in and around the city of Buenos Aires. The plants are close to both the many raw materials imported by ship and the vast productive area of the Pampas. The major vehicles, consumer durables, textiles, chemicals and petrochemicals, printing, metallurgy, and steel. Other industrial areas include Rosario, with important steel-producing plants and oil refineries, tractor and meat-packing plants, and chemicals and tanning industries; Santa Fe with zinc and copper-smelting plants, flour mills, and dairy industry; San Miguel de Tucuman, with sugar refineries; Mendoza and Neuquen, with cotton gins and sawmills; and Santa Cruz, Salta, Tierra del Fuego, Chubut, and Bahía Blanca, with oil fields and refineries.

Packing and processing of foodstuffs is the oldest and most important industry in Argentina. Beginning in the last part of the 19th century, the great frigoríficos, or meat-packing plants, were founded to prepare beef for export to Europe, in recent times, the Argentine government has entered directly into the meat-processing enterprises, which for many years were under British ownership. The textile industry was also

developed quite early, making use of wool from the vast herds of sheep and the cotton from Chaco Province. In addition to these traditional products, a variety of synthetic fibers are now produced.

Portland cement is the country's leading construction material. A major chemical industry produces sulfuric, nitric, and other acids and pharmaceuticals. The most important center of this industry is San Lorenzo on the Rio Parana. The petrochemical industry is related to the increasing production of oil and has received special benefits from the government. In 1985, exports of petroleum fuels exceeded imports for the first time, and by 1999, Argentina was self-sufficient in oil and gas. Natural gas annual output growth should reach 3.4% for the next decade. Output of petroleum fuels reached 800,000 barrels per day in 1999; at the same time, new oil reserves were found in Rio Negro Norte. In 2002, Argentina had 10 oil refineries with a total capacity of 639,000 barrels per day.

In 1961, a giant integrated steel mill began production at San Nicolas. Dependent on steel is the automobile industry, which experienced fairly sustained growth during the 1960s and 1970s. Production rose from 33,000 units in 1959 to 288,917 in 1980. Motor vehicle production peaked at 450,000 in 1998, falling back to around 300,000 in 1999. There were 235,577 automobiles produced in 2001, a 31% decrease from the 339,632 units produced in 2000. Tractors, motorcycles, and bicycles also are manufactured. Argentina also produces electric appliances, communications equipment – including radios and television sets – motors, watches, and numerous other items.

Industry continues to restructure to become competitive

after decades of protection. Capacity utilization rates have increased substantially and companies are now focusing on modernization and expansion of their plants to meet both domestic and foreign demand. New technologies are being adopted, work forces pared, and management is focusing on just what its clients want. Output of cement, trucks, machinery, plastics, petrochemicals and other chemicals all rose, while production of basic metal goods held flat or rose off a low base in the 1990s. A recession that began in 1998 was exacerbated by the economic crisis of December 2001, with Argentina's default on its foreign debt, devaluation of the peso, and conversion of dollar debts and deposits to pesos. Industrial production began to increase in late 2002, however, and the best-performing sectors were textiles, automobile tires, and oils."⁴⁷

(d) Finance

“Argentina’s financial system directly accounts for one-sixth of the GDP, although banking and finance companies employ only a tiny fraction of the workforce. The central bank issues currency, sets interest and exchange rates, and regulates the money supply by deciding the amount of reserve cash that banks must hold.

Economic troubles in the 1970s and ’80s caused the near collapse of the country’s financial system. Inflation made savings deposits almost worthless. In addition, liberal foreign-investment laws and an overvalued peso encouraged excessive borrowing abroad, and defaulted loans caused several bankruptcies. To prevent complete collapse, the government took greater control of private banks, but in the 1990s it largely deregulated them.”⁴⁸

(e) Trade

“Prior to the establishment in the 1990s of the Southern Common Market (Mercado Común del Sur; Mercosur) with Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay, Argentine trade was mainly oriented toward Europe and the United States. Brazil is now Argentina’s most important trading partner.

In the 19th century Argentine beef and grain helped feed Britain’s rapidly rising urban population, and until 1945 Britain was Argentina’s main trading partner. The United States then assumed greater importance, particularly as an importer of Argentine goods. Britain’s share declined and virtually disappeared for a time after the Falkland Islands War of 1982. In addition to Brazil and the United States, Argentina’s major trading partners now include Italy, Germany, The Netherlands, Chile, and Uruguay.

Argentina generally had a favourable balance of trade in the 1980s, but, after the Mercosur pact was enacted, it experienced a few years of trade deficits. The country’s major exports are still agricultural products, notably grain; also important are machinery and transport equipment, petroleum, and chemicals. More than half of its imports, by value, are machinery and transportation equipment. Chemical products and consumer goods are significant as well.”²⁴⁹

7. Government and Social Conditions

(a) Government

“Argentina is a federal union of 23 provincias and a federal capital district, the city of Buenos Aires. Federalism came to Argentina only after a long struggle between proponents of a central government and supporters of provincial interests. The constitution of 1853 was modeled on that of the United States. The constitution promulgated in 1994 provided for consecutive presidential terms, which had not been allowed previously, but few other changes distinguish it from the 1853 document; in its largely original form, the constitution has sustained Argentina with at least a nominal form of republican, representative, and federal government.

Executive power resides in the office of the president, who is elected with a vice president to a four-year term (only two terms can be consecutive). The president is commander in chief of the armed forces and appoints all civil, military, and federal judicial officers, as well as the chief of the Cabinet of Ministers, the body that oversees the general administration of the country. The Argentine legislature, or National Congress, consists of two houses: a 72-seat Senate and a 257-seat Chamber of Deputies. The Senate, whose members are elected to six-year terms, consists of three representatives from each province and the federal capital. The Chamber of Deputies, whose members are elected to four-year terms, is apportioned according to population. Each province has its own government, with executive, legislative, and judicial branches similar to those of the federal government.

The Argentine judicial system is divided into federal and

provincial courts. Supreme Court judges are appointed by the president with approval of the Senate. Federal judges are appointed constitutionally for life, but some of them serve only as long as the administration that appoints them.

The political party system in Argentina has been volatile, particularly in the 20th century, with numerous parties forming, taking part in elections, and disbanding as new factions evolve. Among the major parties are the Radical Civic Union (Unión Cívica Radical; UCR), a centrist party with moderate leftist leanings; the Justicialist Party (Partido Justicialista; PJ), more commonly known as the Peronist party (for its founder, former president Juan Perón), traditionally nationalist and pro-labour but supportive of neoliberal economic policies during the 1990s; the Front for a Country in Solidarity (Frente del País Solidario; Frepaso), a moderate leftist grouping of dissident Peronists; and the Union of the Democratic Centre (Unión del Centro Democrático; UCD, or UCéDé), a traditional liberal party. Under President Carlos Menem the PJ led the government in the 1990s. Frepaso was founded in 1994 from the left-wing Broad Front, the Christian Democratic Party, and other groups; three years later it formed an alliance with the UCR, and in 1999 the alliance's Fernando de la Rúa was elected president. The UCéDé, however, remained separate from many coalitions and had a limited power base in the late 1980s and 1990s.”⁵⁰

(b) Education

“Argentina has one of the more educated populations in Latin America, which is reflected in its large number of schools and high literacy rate. Primary education is compulsory and free; secondary and higher education is

offered in free public schools and in private schools subsidized by the state. Higher education in Argentina was seriously hampered by the censorship and other strictures of the military government of 1976–83, but efforts to restore the system began after a civilian government was returned to power. The National University of Córdoba, founded in 1613, is the nation's oldest, and the University of Buenos Aires, founded in 1821, is its largest. Other major national universities are at Mendoza, La Plata, Rosario, and San Miguel de Tucumán. The National Technical University is located at Buenos Aires.”⁵¹

(c) Health and Welfare

“An extensive system of hospitals and clinics in Argentina is run by national, provincial, and local authorities as well as by private organizations. The cost of medical care is covered by a comprehensive array of occupational insurance plans. Public health and sanitation standards are particularly high in developed areas but can drop off considerably in some of the undeveloped areas. Diseases such as smallpox, cholera, yellow fever, and tuberculosis have been brought under control or eliminated.

Argentina's social welfare services were developed on a large scale during the first presidency (1946–55) of Juan Perón. A social security system was set up to provide extensive benefits for all workers.”⁵²

8. Present Situation

“A presidential election was held on 24 October 1999. The ATJE candidate, Fernando de la Rúa, ended 10 years of Peronist rule, winning 49% of the votes cast. The PJ contender, Eduardo Alberto Duhalde, secured 38% of the ballot. (Menem had been barred by the Supreme Court from contesting the presidency, despite attempting to amend the Constitution in order to stand.) The ATJE also performed well in concurrent congressional elections, winning 63 of the 130 seats up for renewal, while the PJ secured 50 seats and Acción por la República, led by Domingo Cavallo, won nine. The ATJE’s total number of seats in the Cámara increased to 127 – only two short of an absolute majority – in contrast to the PJ, whose representation was reduced to 101 seats. De la Rúa took office as President on 10 December. Later that month the new Congreso Nacional approved an austerity budget that reduced public expenditure by US \$1,400m., as well as a major tax-reform programme and a federal revenue-sharing scheme.

In April 2000 the Senado approved a controversial major revision of employment law. The legislation met with public criticism and led to mass demonstrations by public sector workers and, subsequently, to two 24-hour national strikes organized by the CGT. Later that year the Government came under intense pressure after it was alleged that some senators had received bribes from government officials to approve the employment legislation. In September the Senado voted to end the immunity that protected law-makers, judges and government ministers from criminal investigation in order to allow an inquiry into the corruption allegations. The political crisis intensified on 6 October when Carlos Alvarez resigned as Vice-President, one day after a cabinet reorganization, in

which two ministers implicated in the bribery scandal were not removed. One of these, former labour minister Alberto Flamarique, who was appointed presidential Chief of Staff in the reshuffle, resigned later the same day. The other, Fernando de Santibáñez, head of the state intelligence service, resigned in late October. Earlier that month the President of the Senado, José Genoud, also resigned after he too was implicated in the bribery allegations.

The economic situation continued to deteriorate in 2000 and 2001. In November 2000 thousands of unemployed workers blocked roads throughout the country in protest at the worsening economic conditions and a 36-hour national strike was organized in response to the Government's proposed introduction of an IMF-backed economic recovery package that included a five-year 'freeze' on federal and provincial spending, a reform of the pension system and an increase in the female retirement age. In December the Congreso approved the reforms and, later in the month, the IMF agreed a package, worth an estimated US \$20,000m., to meet Argentina's external debt obligations for 2001.

The resignation of the Minister of the Economy, José Luis Machinea, precipitated another political crisis in March 2001. The announcement by his successor, Ricardo López Murphy, of major reductions in public expenditure, resulted in several cabinet resignations. As a consequence, in late March a second reshuffle occurred, in which Domingo Cavallo was reappointed Minister of the Economy. In June Cavallo announced a series of measures designed to ease the country's financial situation. The most controversial of these was the introduction of a complex trade tariff system that created multiple exchange rates (based on the average of a euro and a

US dollar); this was, in effect, a devaluation of the peso for external trade, although the dollar peg remained in operation for domestic transactions. As Argentina's debt crisis intensified and fears of a default increased, a further emergency package, the seventh in 19 months, was implemented in July. A policy of 'zero deficit' was announced, whereby neither the federal Government nor any province would be allowed to spend more than it collected in taxes. In order to achieve this, state salaries and pensions were to be reduced by 13%. Despite mass protests and a one-day national strike, the measures were granted congressional approval at the end of July. Nevertheless, the economic situation continued to deteriorate. There were protests against the austerity measures in August and following the introduction of one-year bonds, known as 'patacones', as payment to 160,000 public sector workers.

The poor state of the economy contributed to the ATJE's poor performance in the legislative elections of October 2001. The PJ won control of the Cámara de Diputados and increased its lower-house representation to 116 seats overall. In comparison, the ATJE obtained 88 seats. In the Senado, which for the first time was directly elected by popular vote, the PJ increased its majority, winning 40 seats, while the ATJE secured 25 seats. The elections were marred by a very high percentage of spoiled ballots and abstention.

In December 2001, as the economic situation deteriorated and the possibility of a default on the country's debt increased considerably, owing to the IMF's refusal to disburse more funds to Argentina, the Government introduced restrictions on bank account withdrawals and appropriated private pension funds. These measures proved to be extremely unpopular and resulted in two days of rioting

and demonstrations nation-wide, in which at least 27 people died. On 20 December Cavallo resigned as Minister of the Economy and, following further rioting on the same day, President de la Rúa submitted his resignation. Because Alvarez had resigned as Vice-President in the previous year, the newly appointed head of the Senado, Ramón Puerta, became acting President of the Republic, but was succeeded two days later by the Peronist Adolfo Rodríguez Saá. He, in turn, resigned one week later after protests against his proposed economic reforms (including the introduction of a new currency and the suspension of debt repayments) resulted in further unrest. (Due to Puerta's resignation as President of the Senado, Eduardo Camaño, the head of the Cámara de Diputados, briefly became acting President). On 1 January 2002 the former Peronist presidential candidate and recently elected Senator for the Province of Buenos Aires, Eduardo Alberto Duhalde, was elected President by the Congreso Nacional. He was Argentina's fifth President in less than two weeks. On 3 January Argentina officially defaulted on its loan repayments, reportedly the largest ever debt default, and three days later the Senado gave authorization to the Government to set the exchange rate, thus officially ending the 10-year-old parity between the US dollar and the peso. In the following month the Government initiated the compulsory conversion to pesos of US dollar bank deposits in order to prevent capital flight. This process of 'pesofication' led to many lawsuits (amparos) being brought by depositors against financial institutions in an attempt to recover their losses. However, in October 2004 the Supreme Court ruled that the 'pesofication' was not unconstitutional, thereby effectively ruling against future amparos .

Nevertheless, in February 2002 the Supreme Court ruled that the restrictions imposed on bank withdrawals (the *corralito*) were unconstitutional. Some accounts were freed from the restrictions but, in order to forestall the complete collapse of the financial system, the Government imposed a six-month ban on legal challenges to the remainder of the bank withdrawal regime. Numerous bank holidays were also decreed to prevent another run on the banks and a further devaluation of the currency. A constitutional crisis ensued as the Congreso initiated impeachment proceedings against the unpopular Supreme Court Justices (see below). Later that month the Government signed a new tax-sharing pact with the provincial Governors, linking the monthly amount distributed to the provinces to tax collections, as recommended by the IMF. However, in late April Jorge Remes Lenicov resigned as Minister of the Economy following the Senado's refusal to support an emergency plan to exchange 'frozen' bank deposits for government bonds, despite an uncompromising message from the IMF that no further help would be available unless drastic reforms were forthcoming. He was replaced by Roberto Lavagna (the sixth Argentine economy minister in 12 months).

The economy achieved mixed progress during 2002. While the number of deposits in Argentine banks increased, Argentina still defaulted on a US \$805m. loan instalment to the World Bank in November, thus jeopardizing the country's last remaining source of external finance. The situation was aggravated by disagreements between the Minister of the Economy and the President of the Central Bank over the *corralito* restrictions. Public anger against the Government and at the state of the economy did not subside, and in June

two people were killed and dozens more injured when protesters demanding jobs and food clashed with the police. The following day thousands of anti-Government protesters marched in front of the Congreso building, and teachers and public sector workers went on strike.

In the latter half of 2002 congressional efforts to impeach the Supreme Court Justices for incompetence were repeatedly frustrated. The Cámara de Diputados failed to achieve quorum to begin the impeachment debate on five occasions but, in October, and after calls from the IMF for political consensus between the judiciary and the legislature, the impeachment bid was voted down in the Cámara. Nevertheless, later that month one Supreme Court judge resigned. Contentious decisions taken by the Supreme Court included ruling against the corralito, pay and pensions reductions for public sector workers and public utility price increases.

President Duhalde's announcement, in July 2002, that the presidential election would take place six months earlier than planned, on 30 March 2003, was intended to reduce political pressures on the Government during its ongoing negotiations with the IMF. In November 2002, following negotiations between the Government, legislators and provincial Governors, agreement was reached to postpone the presidential election until 27 April 2003. Internal rivalries within the ruling PJ, most notably between Duhalde (who supported the candidacy of the Santa Cruz Governor, Néstor Carlos Kirchner) and former President Carlos Menem, resulted in a bitter argument regarding the election of a Peronist candidate. Eventually, in late January 2003, the PJ congress voted to allow all three Peronist aspirants (namely Menem, Kirchner and Adolfo Rodríguez Saá) to contest the

presidential election, despite a court order (obtained by Menem) ordering that a primary election be held. Menem had been the subject of a number of scandals in 2001 and 2002. In June 2001 he was placed under house arrest on charges of arms-trafficking; however, the charges against him were dismissed in November. He also denied allegations that, while President, he had accepted a payment of US \$10m. to suppress evidence of Iranian involvement in a bomb attack on a Jewish social centre in Buenos Aires in 1994 that had killed 86 people. Menem declared that the money was compensation that he had been awarded for his imprisonment during the military dictatorship and accused the Duhalde Peronist faction of attempting to sabotage his bid for a third presidential term.

At the presidential election on 27 April 2003 Menem obtained the largest share of the popular vote, with 24% of the votes cast, followed by Kirchner (representing the Frente para la Victoria – FPV – faction of the PJ), with 22% of the ballot. Ricardo López Murphy of the centre-right Movimiento Federal para Recrear el Crecimiento alliance came third with 16% of the ballot. The third Peronist candidate, former President Adolfo Rodríguez Saá, representing the Frente Movimiento Popular/Partido Unión y Libertad alliance, was narrowly defeated by Elisa M. A. Carrió of the Alternativa por una República de Iguales (ARI – later renamed the Afirmación para una República Igualitaria), who won 14% of the votes cast. As no candidate had secured the majority of votes required by the Constitution, a run-off ballot between the two leading candidates was scheduled for 18 May. However, faced with the very likely possibility of a decisive protest vote against him, on 14 May Menem withdrew his candidacy from the election. Kirchner was thus elected by

default. He was sworn in as President on 25 May.

Upon taking office, the new President faced the problem of strengthening his relatively weak popular mandate, in order to fulfil his electoral pledges to address Argentina's severe social and economic problems. In his inauguration speech, Kirchner pledged to put the needs of the Argentine people before the demands of the IMF. He immediately announced a series of popular measures, which included the replacement of several high-ranking military and police commanders, the opening of an investigation into allegedly corrupt practices by several Supreme Court Justices (which prompted the resignation of the President of the Supreme Court in June) and increases in pensions and minimum wages. He also announced a programme of investment in infrastructure, particularly housing, intended to lower the high unemployment rate. Kirchner's new Cabinet included five ministers with previous government experience; most notably, Roberto Lavagna, the Minister of the Economy in the previous administration, retained his post. Lavagna had been widely credited with averting hyperinflation and a possible collapse in the financial system in 2002.

President Kirchner's increasing popularity in 2003 successfully translated into significant gains for the PJ in the legislative elections that were held during the latter half of the year, which resulted in a working majority for the PJ and its allies in both the Cámara de Diputados and the Senado (of 127 and 41 seats, respectively). Moreover, the corruption inquiry within the Supreme Court resulted in the removal of four Justices, including the Court's President, Julio Nazareno, all of whom were considered to be hostile to the new President. However, a fifth Justice and ally of Kirchner,

Antonio Boggiano, was charged with misconduct in October 2004 (he was dismissed from the Supreme Court in late September 2005). This impeachment process prompted the Kirchner Government to consider a radical reform of the Supreme Court with a view to reducing its size and remit.

Notwithstanding President Kirchner's pledges to improve social provisions, from 2003 frequent demonstrations against high levels of crime and unemployment continued to cause disruption across the country. Loosely organized groups of protesters, known as *piqueteros*, became increasingly radical during this period, erecting roadblocks and occupying both private and public institutions to demand jobs, redistribution of money and an end to a perceived culture of impunity.

In October 2004 the judges investigating the 1994 bomb attack in Buenos Aires issued a final report acquitting all Argentine suspects, owing to lack of evidence. However, the report severely criticized failures and procedural irregularities by the Menem administration, the judiciary, the intelligence services and federal judge Juan José Galeano, who had led the original investigation. Criminal investigations were subsequently initiated against Galeano, Carlos Corach (Minister of the Interior under Menem) and Hugo Anzorreguy (the former head of the Argentine intelligence service). In February 2005 Galeano was suspended from his post for six months by the Supreme Council of Magistrates. In July President Kirchner formally accepted that successive Governments had failed adequately to investigate the bombing and, on occasion, had sought to withhold relevant information; it was widely understood that this announcement would enable victims of the atrocity to receive state compensation. In August Galeano

was dismissed from his post after the Supreme Court upheld two of 13 misconduct charges against him. In December 2004 Menem returned to Argentina from self-imposed exile in Chile after charges of financial impropriety against him were dropped.

At mid-term elections to the Congreso, held in October 2005, President Kirchner's FPV faction of the PJ secured a resounding victory over the faction of the party led by former President Eduardo Duhalde, Peronismo Federal. Following the ballot, the FPV bloc controlled 118 of the 257 seats in the Cámara de Diputados, compared with 31 held by Duhalde's faction, while the PJ bloc as a whole had 33 of the 72 senatorial seats. The UCR controlled 36 seats in the lower house and 11 in the Senado. The two PJ factions were bitterly divided throughout the electoral campaign, a division most evident in the hostile campaigning of Duhalde's wife, Hilda Beatriz González, and Kirchner's wife, Cristina Elisabet Fernández de Kirchner, who were both elected as Senators for the Province of Buenos Aires. President Kirchner declared the legislative election results to be a clear endorsement by the electorate of his Government, and in the following month he effected a major cabinet reshuffle. Notably, Lavagna resigned as Minister of Economy and Production and was replaced by Felisa Miceli; the ministers for foreign affairs and defence were also replaced by ministers believed to be more closely aligned with Kirchner's policies for regional integration.

Factional division in both the PJ and the UCR characterized the elections of October 2007. Following several months of speculation concerning President Kirchner's intention to seek re-election, in July it was announced that his wife, Cristina Fernández, would instead stand as the FPV

candidate in the presidential election. Her bid was supported by a significant section of the UCR, known as the ‘K Radicals’, whereas another faction of that party – the so-called ‘L Radicals’ – endorsed the candidacy of Lavagna, whose Concertación para Una Nación Avanzada (UNA) coalition also received support from Peronists opposed to President Kirchner’s policies. Alberto Rodríguez Saá (brother of Adolfo Rodríguez Saá) entered the contest representing another anti-Kirchner faction of the PJ, the Frente Justicia, Unión y Libertad (Frejuli). Fernández’s campaign was damaged to some extent by a number of allegations of corruption that affected the Government in 2007, including Miceli’s resignation as Minister of Economy and Production in July following judicial investigations into the discovery of a large quantity of cash in her office. (She was replaced by Miguel Peirano.) In the following month a scandal surrounded the discovery of nearly US \$800,000 in cash in the suitcase of Guido Antonini Wilson, a Venezuelan businessman who was travelling from Venezuela to Argentina on an aircraft chartered by a state-owned company. Opposition parties accused the Government of illegally importing the money in order to fund Fernández’s election campaign.

In spite of these obstacles, Fernández won a decisive victory in the presidential election held on 28 October 2007, securing 41.8% of the votes cast. No candidate succeeded in unifying the opposition: Elisa Carrió of the ARI, who stood for election as part of the Coalición Cívica alliance, obtained 21.3% of the vote, while Lavagna received 15.6% of votes cast and Rodríguez Saá took just 7.1%. Fernández’s margin of victory was thus considerably in excess of the 10 percentage points below which a run-off ballot would have been required.

The participation rate was 76.2%. Following the concurrent partial elections to the Congreso the FPV legislative bloc emerged with 120 seats in the Cámara de Diputados and 42 seats in the Senado, thereby gaining an overall majority in the upper chamber, while the UCR's representation was reduced to 24 and eight seats, respectively. President Fernández was sworn in on 10 December. Her Cabinet retained seven members of the outgoing administration; one notable new appointment was that of Martín LoustEAU, hitherto head of the state-owned Banco de la Provincia de Buenos Aires, who replaced Peirano as Minister of Economy and Production.

In mid-March 2008 the four main agricultural unions began strike action and erected roadblocks in protest at a recent announcement of sharp increases in tariffs on the export of soybeans, sunflower products and other foodstuffs. Despite causing serious food shortages, the protests attracted widespread popular support, and violent clashes occurred in Buenos Aires between Government supporters and those sympathetic to the farmers. The Government defended the tax rises (the latest in a series of increases in the same tariffs in recent months) as necessary to control inflation resulting from substantial rises in grain prices on international markets, as well as to guarantee domestic supplies. A 30-day truce was called by the unions in April to allow for negotiations with the Government; however, further strikes resumed in May after talks failed to yield significant concessions from either side in the dispute. Meanwhile, a rally in Rosario organized by the farming unions in late May was attended by an estimated 200,000 people, while further large-scale demonstrations took place in mid-June in protest at the Government's increasingly uncompromising attitude towards the unions' demands.

Shortly afterwards, and in response to the public exhortation of Vice-President Julio César Cleto Cobos, President Fernández agreed to allow the Congreso to ratify the tariff increases. (The farmers' fourth and final strike ended two days later.) The ensuing draft legislation was narrowly approved by the Cámara de Diputados, but was defeated in the Senado in mid-July by the casting vote of Vice-President Cobos, the chamber's President. The decree that had introduced the tariff increases was subsequently revoked. The Government's defeat in the legislature, which occurred despite the FPV's dominance of both chambers, resulted in the resignation in late July of the Cabinet Chief, Alberto Fernández, who was replaced by Sergio Massa. Cobos, a former UCR member who had been expelled from the party in 2007 for allying with Cristina Fernández, rejected suggestions that he too should stand down.

Meanwhile, in April 2008 Lousteau (who had been responsible for introducing the tariff increases) resigned as Minister of Economy and Production as a result of disputes with the Secretary of Domestic Trade, Guillermo Moreno; notably, Lousteau opposed the Government's inflation policy, instead endorsing widespread claims that the official index deliberately under-represented the extent of inflation. He was succeeded by Carlos Rafael Fernández, who was regarded as being more closely aligned to President Fernández's policies. Also in April former President Kirchner became President of the PJ after no legitimate rival candidate emerged.

In October 2008 the Government announced plans to assume state control of Argentina's 10 private pension funds (Administradoras de Fondos de Jubilaciones y Pensiones – AFJPs), established by the Menem administration in 1994.

President Fernández declared that the nationalization would protect workers' investments from the decline in the value of the funds caused by turmoil in world-wide financial markets. The scheme was strongly criticized by the opposition, which claimed that the Government intended to use the AFJPs' assets (worth some US \$30,000m.) to meet its rising debt-servicing obligations. None the less, the take-over received congressional approval in November and took effect in January 2009. Later in November the President announced a major programme of spending on public works intended to stimulate economic growth (see Economic Affairs); as part of the scheme a new Ministry of Production was created, with Débora Adriana Giorgi appointed as Minister.

In March 2009 President Fernández announced her intention to bring forward by four months the mid-term congressional elections due in October, claiming that the global economic crisis made a lengthy election campaign undesirable. A bill temporarily to amend the existing electoral legislation was approved by the Congreso later in March, and elections were consequently scheduled for 28 June. Critics of the Government alleged that the move was an attempt to lessen the electoral damage that the FPV might have suffered later in the year as a result of the worsening economic situation.”⁵³

9. Future Prospects

We very well know that, the present situation of Argentina is very confusing. The government of Argentina is not at all steady. During the last few years, six economic ministers have changed, many presidents have changed. The current president, Christine Fernandez Kircher, is not working well people do not seem to be happy with her, so there are chances that in next elections new government will come. There are many parties but most chances are of ATJE or CGT because these parties have always worked challengingly against Cristina's party. If ATGE or CGT takes over the government then present situation may change. There may be peace in public, which is always protesting against the present government.

On the economic front, some few years ago the nation had an enormous external debt, and inflation had reached a level of 200% per month. The GDP growth had reached 8% per year. Influence of both problem are still there. The new government may change these problems by bringing new policies and plans. And make a good nation. If by chance PJ comes again to power after the elections, then future conditions can be worse or can be simple. Because on one side it is allowing to establish new factories and industries and at another side because of the external debt restricting on bank account withdrawals and appropriate private pension funds, which have resulted in two days of riots. Therefore, the present situation of Argentina is so confusing that to say about the future is not easy, it all depends on public to whom it chooses and gives the chance to lead country ahead.

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