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KING DAVID SOCIETY



# ARGENTINA

*QUICK GUIDE*

ARGENTINIAN HISTORY 101

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# ARGENTINIAN HISTORY: A TIMELINE

**PRE-16TH CENTURY:** While little is known about the indigenous who lived in Argentina pre-Spanish colonization, historians do know there were civilizations located here dating back as far as 9,000 years ago. This is best exemplified by the Cueva de las Manos cave art.

**1535:** Spain sends an expedition, lead by Pedro de Mendoza, to begin settlement in Argentina. This was a direct result of Portugal's colonization of Brazil.

**1536:** Pedro de Mendoza officially founds Buenos Aires, making it the first Spanish settlement in the country.

**1573:** The city of Cordoba is founded in central Argentina by Jeronimo Luis de Cabrera.

**16TH CENTURY-18TH CENTURY:** From the 16th century until 1776, Argentina was considered a subordinate part of the Viceroyalty of Peru—one of four Spanish viceroalties established for governance in South America.

**1776:** Spain redraws its borders, with Argentina becoming its own country under Spanish rule. It is now part of the new Spanish colony, the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata.

**1806:** A British fleet attacks the Rio de la Plata area and loses, becoming an inciting incident for revolution. When Spain loses to Napoleon, Argentina begins its fight for independence.

**1810:** The May Revolution occurs in Buenos Aires and the Argentine War of Independence officially begins.

**1816:** Argentina declares its independence breaking free from Spanish rule after six years of internal fighting. Following independence, Argentina enters an ongoing period of internal fighting. Power begins to lie with Caudillos—glorified war lords with private armies.

**1853:** With the approval of the Argentine Constitution, Argentina officially becomes a republic.

*Interesting Fact:* Since establishing its independence, Argentina has gone through countless wars and internal struggles, with some of the most notorious including *The War of the Triple Alliance*, *Peronism*, and *the Falklands Islands War*.

**1910:** Argentina is considered one of the wealthiest countries in the world for annual growth per capita—their GDP rivalling that of Belgium and surpassing the United States and Canada. However, Argentina's upward growth does not last long, completely halting by the 50s.

**1944/1945:** Though Argentina stays out of the majority of World War II, they ultimately join the Allies in March 1945.

**1946:** Juan Perón becomes president, leading to one of the country's most contentious periods. During Perón's rule, he increases the power of the president, censors the media, imprisons rivals, and through Perón's sympathies, Nazis are able to escape Germany and establish homes in Argentina.

## HISTORICAL TIMELINE

**1952:** Evita Perón is named the “Spiritual Leader of the Nation” in 1952, but dies later that year.

**1955:** Juan Perón is ousted as president and goes into exile in Spain. This begins a very tumultuous period for Argentina under military rule and weak/corrupt governments.

**1970-1976:** During this time, Argentina has 11 different presidents, including the return of Juan Perón, who is re-elected president in 1973. His new wife, Isabel, is made vice-president and she takes over when Perón dies the following year.

**1976:** In March 1976, the junta (military group) stages a coup and removes Isabel Perón from office. Three days later, the junta takes over government and forms a military dictatorship. This begins what is known as the “Dirty War.”

**1982:** Argentina goes to war with the British over the Falkland Islands. While Argentina had claimed sovereignty over the Islands, the British seized control in 1833. For over a century, Argentina’s claim to the Falkland Islands was denied. As a political maneuver, the junta launches an invasion of the Islands—this is an attempt to regain favour with the Argentinian public, given their loss of popularity from the “Dirty War”. However, after 10 weeks, Argentina surrenders. While remaining British territory, the area is still contested and a controversial subject.

**2001-2003:** While the politics and government eventually settle for a while, between 2001 and 2003, Argentina sees a rotation of five presidents. Overall, Argentina’s political leadership has been turbulent since Perón’s election.



# THE WAR OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE

The War of the Triple Alliance, also known as the Paraguayan War, is considered the deadliest conflict in South American history, spanning six years (1864–1870). Fought between Paraguay and the triple-alliance of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, it is believed that over half of Paraguay's population, including 90 percent of its male citizens, perished during this devastating war.

The roots of the conflict can be traced back to political and territorial disputes among the countries in the region. Latin American countries had only recently gained independence from Spanish and Portuguese rule, and borders were still roughly defined. Paraguay, an isolated and authoritarian state, was under the leadership of Francisco Solano López, whose aggressive policies and ambitions led to tensions with neighbouring countries.

López, inspired by French revolutions and Napoleon III after time spent in Europe, believed he had a greater right to influence the outcome of Uruguay's political conflicts. Prompted by Brazil's involvement in Uruguay, where two oligarchies were competing for control (the Blanco faction already in power and the Colorado faction) supported by Brazil and striving to seize control—López supported the Blanco faction.

The war officially began on April 12, 1864, when Paraguayan forces attacked the Brazilian garrison of Uruguay's capital, Montevideo, to prove López's superiority. Paraguay then seized control of a Brazilian

merchant ship and imprisoned the Brazilian governor of the province Mato Grosso. A month later, López ordered his army to invade Mato Grosso, sacked the capital, and laid claim to the entire province. He then proceeded to call himself “El Supremo.”

López, angered by President Bartolomé Mitre's refusal to allow his army through Argentina, had his title elevated to Marshal of Paraguay, and his congress granted him extreme war powers, which he promptly used to declare war on Argentina. He captured Argentinian naval ships and took over towns, anointing himself the master of the Corrientes province in Argentina, as well as the adjoining province of Entre Rios.

However, the battle for leadership in Uruguay, the initial cause, concluded with the Colorado faction taking control. The new leadership, allied with Argentina, declared war on Paraguay on April 18th. Two weeks later, Brazil joined Argentina and Uruguay, creating the Triple Alliance.

The war, lasting six years, featured intense and brutal battles. Despite Paraguay's early military prowess, the combined forces of Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, with superior resources and manpower, turned the tide. The outcome and its impact have lasted over a century.

Paraguay's population was decimated by the war, with most of the country's men killed. It's estimated that around 70 percent of its overall population perished due to battle casualties, disease, and famine. The country was left in ruins, and its society was profoundly affected. The political, social, and economic landscape of the region was reshaped, leaving a legacy of trauma and bitterness that has lasted for generations.



# PERONISM

Also referred to as justicialism, Peronism is a socialist political movement and ideology, led by its namesake Juan Perón. Peronism rejects the principles of capitalism and communism, claiming to only focus of the interest of the people to form a true democracy, where citizens are all of one class and the government defends their interests. “A government without doctrine is a body without soul. That’s why Peronism has a political, economic and social doctrine: justicialism.”

According to the tenants set forth by Perón, Peronism demands an Argentina that is socially “fair,” economically “free,” and politically “sovereign.” However, while claiming to be about the people, Perón was a fascist and corrupt leader.

Juan Perón became the president of Argentina in 1946, which led to one of the country’s most contentious periods. He increased the power of the president, censored the media, and imprisoned his rivals. It is through Perón’s sympathies that Nazi’s were able to escape Germany and establish homes in Argentina.



Perón and his wife Eva (commonly referred to as Evita) were self-proclaimed socialist leaders, fighting for the working man. While many causes they championed were for the better, Perón ultimately lead a corrupt fascist regime, which became more controversial and problematic after his wife’s passing in 1952.

*THERE ARE 20 TENANTS OF THIS IDEOLOGY, FOUND IN PERÓN’S “PERONIST PHILOSOPHY.” SOME OF THESE PRINCIPLES INCLUDE:*

- “A true democracy is that one in which the government does what the people want and defends only one interest: the people’s.”
- “Peronism is essentially of the common people. Any political elite is anti-people, and thus, not Peronist.”
- “For Peronism, there is only one class of person: those who work.”
- “Working is a right that creates the dignity of men; and it’s a duty, because it’s fair that everyone should produce as much as they consume at the very least.”
- “No Peronist should feel more than what he is, nor less than what he should be. When a Peronist feels more than what he is, he begins to turn into an oligarch.”
- “Politics are not an end, but a means for the well-being of Argentina: which means happiness for our children and greatness for our nation.”
- “The two arms of Peronism are social justice and social help. With them, we can give a hug of justice and love to the people.”
- “Kids should be the only privileged class.”
- “As political doctrine, justicialism balances the right of the individual and society. As an economic doctrine, justicialism proposes a social market, putting capital to the service of the economy and the well-being of the people. As a social doctrine, justicialism carries out social justice, which gives each person their rights in accordance to their social function.”

# THE DIRTY WAR

The Dirty War, spanning 1976 to 1983, stands as a somber chapter in Argentina's history. After Isabel Perón's ousting in 1976, the military junta seized power, suppressing perceived left-wing opposition and intellectuals. An estimated 10,000 to 30,000 citizens lost their lives during this period.

The junta rapidly imposed censorship, dissolved trade unions, closed the National Congress, and asserted military authority over all government levels. They initiated the Process of National Reorganization to suppress left-wing guerrilla activity.

This campaign led to the establishment of over 300 secret detention centres, where anyone considered subversive or leaning left was held. Initially, the public believed only guerrilla militants were targeted, but it soon became evident a broader range of individuals was affected, leaving families in anguish, unaware of their loved ones' fate.

These clandestine centres were hubs of brutality and torture. Victims suffered unspeakable horrors, and many never returned. Over the years, international attention turned toward Argentina. Human rights groups, journalists, and activists worked tirelessly to expose the truth and pressure the regime.

The junta's power dwindled due to economic instability and growing opposition. In 1983, facing mounting pressure, they relinquished control, marking the Dirty War's end. Argentina grapples with the scars, seeking justice for victims and their families. The Dirty War's legacy underscores defending human rights and preserving democratic values.

# THE FALKLANDS WAR

In 1982, Argentina and Britain clashed over the Falkland Islands, a territory Britain had controlled since 1833, despite Argentina's claim. The conflict stemmed from Argentina's political maneuver to divert attention from accusations of human rights abuses and economic mismanagement by launching an invasion.

On April 2nd, Argentina seized the Falklands. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher responded by declaring a war zone around the islands. The British launched a counterattack in late May, facing relentless air assaults. The Battle of San Carlos, from May 21st to 25th, witnessed air-naval combat and the sinking of three British ships.

After British forces landed in San Carlos Water, retaking the Falklands, a series of battles ensued. These included Goosegreen, a 14-hour conflict, the Battle of Mount Harriet, the Battle of Two Sisters, and the Battle of Mount Longdon. Surrounding Stanley, the capital city, the British forced the Argentine military's surrender. The 10-week conflict claimed approximately 650 Argentine lives and 255 British soldiers.

On June 14, 1982, the Falklands returned to British control. The region remains a contentious and disputed subject.



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