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For the period 1945-90, longstanding academic and popular narratives of Argentina have set the Cold War on the margins of important historical developments with only a few exceptions. The project that I am currently engaged in reassesses those narratives in two stages. First, it breaks down traditionally organized historical chronologies in Argentina to suggest poorly understood but crucial continuities across the decades. Second, and building on that historiographical shift, it proposes several avenues toward a new understanding of the centrality of the global Cold War to Argentine history.

Whether focused on work, political change, social problems, economic developments, or cultural shifts, the historical literature of post-World War II Argentina has emphasized severe political breaks. In each of these areas, how we understand historical change has been influenced by upheaval, from democracy to dictatorship to democracy. Key moments of political disruption – such as the military toppling of President Juan Perón in 1955, the 1976 coup d'état, and the 1983 return to democracy – have established often rigid boundaries for historical periodization. Profound political change has suggested to scholars a new start, and new departures in all historical realms. To some degree, this makes perfect sense. This is evident, for example, in contemplating Argentina's appalling human rights record during the last dictatorship (1976-1983) with a dramatic reversal in government policy in that area after 1983.

At the same time, the tendency to break the Cold War period into rigid time periods that highlight liberal democracy versus populism versus dictatorship has obscured key continuities that have had a profound influence on Argentine society. This project recovers those continuities by positing that as distinct as governments were across the key moments of political disruption, and as sharp as the disruptive political transitions were, change over time was often not as stark as historians have argued. Continuities in government policy and in society reflect a poorly understood impact of the global Cold War on Argentina. This project is concerned in the first instance with analyzing that impact and the place of Argentina in the global Cold War. Three principal areas of reassessment here are the linked significance of anti-Communism, the atomic age, and the cultural Cold War.

The current historical literature and popular narratives hold that anti-Communism, while present to a limited extent in Argentina throughout the Cold War, was principally linked to military dictatorship, and the impact of the U.S.-led National Security Doctrine in South America. Scholars have traced the origins of counterinsurgency warfare in Argentina, for example, to the early 1960s and U.S. anti-Communism, the Argentine procurement of American weapons systems suited to anti-guerrilla warfare, and

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the emergence of a new, rabidly anti-Communist officer class in the Argentine military after 1960. This narrative explains to a significant extent the beginnings of the brutal dictatorship of 1976-83. At the same time, though, and in a historiography that conceives of democracy and dictatorship as political opposites, the narrative divorces dictatorship from earlier roots of strong anti-Communism in Cold War Argentina and from continuities post-1983. Based on government and other archival sources in Argentina, this project argues that Argentine anti-Communism was a notable ideological and political force before 1960. Anti-Communist politics shaped foreign and domestic policies, from the persecution of opponents of Peronism before 1955, to the military's attack on Peronists after the 1955 coup d'état. It also influenced a range of international strategic policies that both anticipated a third world war long before this became an anti-Communist dictum of the post-1975 dictatorship, and that found common cause with U.S.-led international anti-Communism to a far greater degree than previously understood. Throughout the Cold War, Argentine political leaders of many stripes saw anti-Communism as a priority and made it an underpinning of a range of social, cultural, and political projects. This emphasis before 1960 helped shape the emergence of authoritarian rule after that date.

In a context of anti-Communism, like many countries outside the Soviet bloc including France, the United States, and Germany, Argentina stressed important national projects bookmarked by Cold War start and finishing points. Foremost among these was a nuclear policy that despite dramatic political variation from 1945 to 1990 changed little over the Cold War while reflecting many of the hallmarks that made nuclear policy a central feature of the Cold War in other industrial countries. Argentine leaders viewed nuclear power as inherently modern. They imagined it as the basis for a dynamic naval fleet and for expanded industry. Most important, they saw the dissemination of Argentine nuclear technology as a means to international strategic influence. At the same time, the Argentine Cold War is transcended by international cultural and social touchstones that include a latent atomic fear reflected in film, literature, and animation; the emergence of an equivalent to second wave feminism; and the explosion of a modern consumer culture.