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14. ABSTRACT During the 2008 financial crisis, China was able to make its sudden appearance in Latin America. Argentina, one of the countries hit by the crisis, found in China an ally that could give Argentina financial stability. In 2015, the Argentine Congress granted property and China built there the Deep Space Antenna to monitor Chinese space missions. However, the dual use of the Antenna could interrupt communications from the United States as well as obtain intelligence from the United States partners and allies. Due to the influence exerted by China on this delicate matter, Argentina could be at risk of having its relations with the United States deteriorated.					
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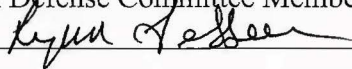
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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THE DRAGON IN ARGENTINA:
IS CHINA THREATENING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND
ARGENTINA?

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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Executive Summary

Title: The Dragon in Argentina: Is China threatening relations between the United States and Argentina?

Author: Commander Juan Espíndola, Argentine Navy

Thesis: The presence of China in Argentina does not compromise the partnership and interoperability between Argentina and the United States, because China prioritizes its strategic development mainly in the Indo-Pacific region, keeps its actions in South America limited, and finds resistance in aspects of the diplomacy of Argentina.

Discussion: At a time when the world was still trying to recover from the 2008 financial crisis, China was able to make its sudden appearance in Latin America and exert its influence simultaneously in several of the countries of that region. The moment was also propitious due to the significant number of left-leaning governments in South America, with policies and objectives similar to those of China. Argentina, one of the countries hit by the crisis, found in China an ally that could give Argentina financial stability so that it would not have to depend on the capital of the West. However, as Argentines would later discover, the return of the loans would bring unintended consequences for Argentina and the United States. In 2015, in the last year of the presidency of Cristina Kirchner, the Congress of the Argentine Nation granted to China a property with a tax exemption for fifty years in the vicinity of Bajada del Agrio, Province of Neuquén. On that property, China built the Deep Space Antenna, to monitor Chinese space missions. However, as has been stated in United States documents, this dual use could interrupt communications from the United States as well as obtain intelligence from the United States partners and allies. Due to the influence exerted by China on this delicate matter, Argentina could be at risk of having its relations with the United States deteriorated.

Conclusion: Relations and interoperability of the United States and Argentina are not compromised by the presence of China in the Argentine territory because Argentina has signaled a closer position to the United States, it has limited the influence of China in its territory, and China's strategic motivation is primarily in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Table of Contents

	Page
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
DISCLAIMER	ii
PREFACE	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
Literature Review.....	5
THE GENERAL STRATEGY OF CHINA IN THE INDO PACIFIC	9
CHINA IN ARGENTINA AND THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.....	14
ASPECTS OF ARGENTINA’S DIPLOMACY.....	18
CONCLUSION.....	24
BIBLIOGRAPHY	27

Preface

I have discovered the importance of strategy, national interests, and power schemes in participating as an international student at Command and Staff College at the Marine Corps University, in Quantico, Virginia. The growth of China and the implications for the world that we know have caught my attention and led me to investigate to what extent the dynamics of countries that are far from the Chinese physical area of influence may be affected. As a valuable tool that is military education, I find it essential to take distance from specific knowledge of the arms career and begin to understand the internal mechanisms of specific issues that concern and that are resolved at another level of leadership.

Introduction

In the last two decades, the influence of China in the Western Hemisphere has considerably increased, with China's presence in several Latin American countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela, along with an extensive global commercial activity. The financial crisis of 2008 and the emergence of leftist governments in the countries above established the right conditions for China to exercise its presence in the region. At the time, the possibility of receiving investments in infrastructure and obtaining financing credits with seeming low interest attracted several countries to open up to trade with China.

In the early 2000s, Argentina was one of those countries that sympathized ideologically with China, something that facilitated concessions in exchange for financing. However, the dynamic interaction between Argentina and China began several years earlier, in 1972, when the government of President Alejandro Lanusse formally recognized the People's Republic of China.¹ The understanding made between these two countries was in part by the policy of rapprochement previously initiated by the United States, but also by an internal need of the Argentine government to expand its trade options. From that moment on, and even though the South American country was under the administration of different governments, a prudent and constant interaction was maintained but with greater understanding during the presidencies of Nestor and Cristina Kirchner from 2003 until 2015.

The ideological compatibility of these governments and the need to attract capital made Argentina the prime attraction for China to make its landing on different fronts. Currently, the focus of China is on developing its potential through the infrastructure project known as the Belt

¹ Jorge Eduardo Malena, "China and Argentina: Beyond the Quest for Natural Resources" in *China Engages Latin America: Tracing the Trajectory*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 258.

and Road Initiative, which seeks to strengthen the land and sea routes of Asia, Africa, Europe, Oceania, and the Americas. Although the concentration of networks is in the Indo-Pacific region, China's reach has spread in all directions, exerting its influence in any way convenient to its purposes.²

While China's main priority lies in the Indo-Pacific, the South Atlantic has not been a region entirely unknown to the Chinese, and that is evident in the number of investments on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, although the Chinese engagement has more development on the African continent, due to the greater number of countries in that region that provide China with oil.³ Until the construction of the Panama Canal, trade between China and the Latin American countries was through both the Strait of Magellan and Cape Horn, allowing the South American countries frequent exchange of goods with the Chinese. This economic emergence of China in Latin America offered favorable conditions in the short term.⁴ However, in the long term, certain terms of the agreement did not always favor the receiving countries, as Ecuador and Argentina later discovered.⁵ In the case of the latter, with the promulgation of Law 27.123, in March 2015, the Argentine Republic officially provided the People's Republic of China with a location for the installation of a scientific research station in the territory of the Province of Neuquén, with a tax exemption for fifty years, for the development of the Chinese lunar program⁶. In the framework of a cooperation agreement initiated in 2014, based on internationally recognized treaties and

² Daniel P. Erikson, "Conflicting US Perceptions of China's Inroads in Latin America" in *China Engages Latin America: Tracing the Trajectory*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 120.

³ Adriana Erthal Abdenur and Danilo Marcondes de Souza Nieto, "China's growing role in the South Atlantic", *Revista CIDOB d'Affairs Internacionals*, no.102-103 (2013):171, <https://doaj.org/article/39543fdeee9d4cf8b09fd36007fe9d50.pdf>.

⁴ *Posture Statement of the United States Southern Command: statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 115th Congress, 6 (2018) (statement of Admiral Kurt W. Kidd, Commander, United States Southern Command).

⁵ Jorge Guajardo, "A Latin America Perspective on China's Growing Presence in the Region" in *Latin America and the Asian Giants*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 69.

⁶ Acuerdo de Cooperación – Aprobación, Argentine Congress. Law 27.123.(April 23, 2014).

standards to govern the activities of space exploration, both parties committed to maintaining the status of peaceful use of the facility. However, this whole process raised doubts in the international community about China's true intentions, because the China Space Administration is a civilian agency that is linked to the Chinese Armed Forces through the State Administration for Science, Technology, and Industry for National Defense. Beyond the scientific benefits, the suspicions were around on the duality of purposes that the monitoring station could fulfill. Built in a remote area, near the town of Bajada del Agrio, Province of Neuquén, the Deep Space Antenna of the China National Space Administration, according to the media, has the apparent ability to be used in the guidance and control of missiles⁷, although its possible dual use could also violate the communication networks of the United States as well as gather intelligence on the activities of its allies and partners in the region.⁸ According to this logic, China could potentially be violating the agreement established with Argentina on the peaceful use during the current mandate of President Mauricio Macri and could develop the capacity to interfere with the space activities of the United States and its allies.⁹ The speed with which the Chinese reached the agreements for the establishment of the Station and, and its accelerated construction and implementation, raised immediate concerns in all forums, including in Argentina.¹⁰ The detractors of this reasoning state that through Law 25.775 of 2003, the Argentine government had previously ceded a concession property to the European Space Agency, for the construction

⁷ The New York Times, "From a Space Station in Argentina, China expands its Reach in Latin America" <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/world/americas/china-latin-america.html>.

⁸ *Posture Statement of the United States Southern Command: statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 6.

⁹ *Posture Statement of the United States Southern Command: statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 116th Congress, 7 (2019) (statement of Admiral Craig S. Faller, Commander, United States Southern Command).

¹⁰ Clarín, "Un alto jefe militar de los Estados Unidos advirtió que la base china en Neuquén podría usarse para fines no civiles" https://www.clarin.com/politica/alto-jefe-militar-unidos-advirtio-base-china-neuquen-podria-usarse-fines-civiles_0_COONGuVT8.html.

of a Deep Space Antenna in the town of Malargüe, Province of Mendoza.¹¹ In operation since 2012, the monitoring station has the same features of the Chinese station, and with the same purpose to establish control over probes, satellites, and track the space missions. The 2018 Posture Statement of the Commander of United States Southern Command explicitly exposes the implications of China's actions in Latin America. The document lists the severe impact that these interferences could cause in the efforts of the United States to maintain the cohesion of partnerships with the countries of the region. For this Operational Command, China expands on its objective of reforming the global economic system by providing Latin American countries with loans and financing with no apparent contractual requirement, seeking to undermine American efforts in maintaining security relationships and placing at risk the interests of the American government in Latin America. In addition to the above, the Posture Statement emphasizes that the United States and its allies may find their security compromised due to Chinese efforts in terms of communications and space ventures with the potential use in intelligence gatherings. As described above, Argentina is one of those countries influenced by China's application of soft-power methods, and therefore it is necessary to clarify how the Argentine government privileges its relationship with the United States.¹²

Accordingly, the Chinese Antenna in Argentine territory represents a concern for the United States and its allies due to its potential employment capacities, which is why this fact should be carefully analyzed. This paper thus considers several questions concerning these developments. With the establishment in Argentine territory, does China seek to challenge the United States in the South Atlantic? Has Argentina been automatically linked to Chinese

¹¹ Acuerdo de Cooperación Espacial para Usos Pacíficos, Argentine Congress. Law 25.775.(August 13, 2003).

¹² *Posture Statement of the United States Southern Command: statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee*, 115th Congress, 5-6 (2018) (statement of Admiral Kurt W.Kidd, Commander, United States Southern Command).

influence? Could the presence of the Antenna damage the historical relations between the United States and Argentina?

Thesis

This thesis argues that the presence of China in Argentina does not compromise the partnership and interoperability between Argentina and the United States, because China prioritizes its strategic development mainly in the Indo-Pacific region, keeps its actions in South America limited, and finds resistance in aspects of the diplomacy of Argentina.

To determine the implications of China's engagement in Latin America, this thesis has two sections from the point of view of the strategy of China (one from the generality of the Indo-Pacific region and another oriented to its interests in Argentina and the South Atlantic Ocean), and a final section with the diplomatic measures adopted by Argentina in relation to China that will help to answer the research questions and therefore, to strengthen the proposed thesis.

Literature review

Two books present an analysis of the emergence of China in Latin America and give an account of the Chinese soft power employed through trade and financing. The first one, *China Engages Latin America*, is an investigation carried out by several authors that present different perspectives of the problem according to their research area. The researchers agree that China's trade with Africa and with Latin America had a significant increase since 2000 and that China's need for new raw material sources led it to establish ties of "strategic partner" with at least four countries in Latin America.¹³ This motive is what has led China to expand in South America, which even included the development of cultural and linguistic studies centers in Argentina.¹⁴ According to the authors, the appearance of China in the region is related to the wave of socialist

¹³ Ariel C. Armony "The China-Latin America Relationship: Convergences and Divergences" in *China Engages Latin America: Tracing the Trajectory*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 24.

¹⁴ Ariel C. Armony "The China-Latin America Relationship: Convergences and Divergences", 25.

governments that began to spread throughout the continent, establishing the ideal framework for the Chinese approach and its financing system outside the western credit system. From the year 2000, governments like those of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, and Venezuela, all elected socialist-populist governments. This trend occurred due to the widespread discontent with the economic performance of different previous models.¹⁵

Secondly, China also promoted an image of a "developing country,"¹⁶ which appealed to the anti-American sentiment embraced by these populist governments. This narrative allowed for Chinese investments in the region in exchange for raw materials and commodities, a win-win situation, at least on the surface. The global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 allowed many Latin American countries to free themselves from economic dependence on the United States and credit loan organization such as the International Monetary Fund. Many Latin American countries consider the IMF as a tool of the hegemonic power of the United States, and that is why Chinese funding came at the most opportune time to avoid restrictions imposed by IMF loans. The swap agreement with Argentina in 2009, consisting of the injection of Chinese capital to replace the dollar as currency, was sound proof of this. Argentina was able to acquire immediate financial fluidity to face the domestic needs without having to resort to fiscally austere Western financing institutions.¹⁷ In addition to Argentina, other countries benefitted from Chinese capital, including Brazil, Ecuador, Chile, and Venezuela.

The key divergent point in this book is that the countries of Latin America have more in common with the United States than with China. The explanation is that this is mainly due to the vast majority of countries having democratic governments that are opposed to the communist and authoritarian model of government adopted by China. This factor is one of several that could

¹⁵ Ariel C. Armony "The China-Latin America Relationship: Convergences and Divergences", 28.

¹⁶ Ariel C. Armony "The China-Latin America Relationship: Convergences and Divergences", 31.

¹⁷ Ariel C. Armony "The China-Latin America Relationship: Convergences and Divergences", 37.

limit the influence of China in the region. Although China's capital has penetrated the region and its influence appears to be as crucial in the economic sphere, it is clear that many Latin American countries have not yet fully identified with the Chinese model. In other words, their link to China is part of the commercial exchange and not part of a lasting strategic alliance. It is important to note that throughout the book the approach proposed by the authors focus on presenting China as a significant economic player in Latin America. However, the authors avoid exposing China as a direct threat to the interests of the United States, noting that there are few points of friction between the two and making it clear that China is sensitive to provoke the United States in the region. The authors ruled out that China presents a credible military threat and exposes as undeveloped the relations between armed forces of the different Latin American countries with China, despite the exchanges of personnel and the sale of arms in some of these.¹⁸

The book *Latin America and the Asian Giants* by Riordan Roett and Guadalupe Paz is also a compilation of works by different authors, with the peculiarity that their work focuses on explaining the relationships among Latin American countries not only with China but also with India. In thirteen chapters, several authors offer from different points of view an overview of commercial relationships that began long before the financial crisis of 2008, though recognizing a more significant activity after this, and that continues to this day. The authors agree that China fundamentally seeks its development and that its approach to the region was due to the emergence of ideologically compatible Latin American governments. The financing, which occurred at the time of the financial meltdown of 2008, was oriented towards countries in the region that stood out as food suppliers, such as Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, and Ecuador, and which China considered as strategic partners since its inception. Unlike the previous book, the

¹⁸ Daniel P. Erikson, "Conflicting US Perceptions of China's Inroads in Latin America" in *China Engages Latin America: Tracing the Trajectory*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 125.

authors point out in several of its chapters the unethical conduct and commercial practices of China in Latin America that could be giving a few benefits to these countries.¹⁹ As an example, the authors maintain that despite having received with open arms the vast Chinese sums of money as loans, some nations realize the predatory and abusive nature of Chinese financing.²⁰ In this regard, they point out that China's policy of "oil for loans" that worked particularly well in countries like Venezuela, although initially presented as an alternative to obtaining foreign currency immediately, ultimately left little profit margin to those countries.

China's restrictive and coercive conditions were considerably harsher and more unpalatable than those presented by western financial aid agencies. In this line of reasoning, the authors agree that China's actions in Latin America could lead several countries to deindustrialization due to the forced need to compete with imported products manufactured in China.²¹ Similarly, China's significant appetite for energy resources has led to a persistent extractive oil and mineral policy that leaves little room for the development of the rest of the productive capacities of Latin American countries.

A particularity of this book is that it devotes a chapter to analyze the implications of China in the region from a security point of view. The authors highlight that China's arms sales and exchange of military personnel, indicate purchases from Venezuela and Ecuador, governments that still have an ideological affinity to China. As an example, the argument is that both Argentina and Peru, despite having committed themselves in some way, finally decided to cancel their respective purchases. Regarding relations between military personnel, the authors

¹⁹ Xiang Lanxin, "China Goes Geopolitical In Its Strategic Partnership with Latin America" in *Latin America and the Asian Giants*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 67.

²⁰ Anthony Boadle, "Seeking a better deal for Latin America: New opportunities or more of the same?" in *Latin America and the Asian Giants*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 86.

²¹ Anthony Boadle, "Seeking a better deal for Latin America: New opportunities or more of the same?" in *Latin America and the Asian Giants*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 83.

mention that countries such as Colombia and Brazil have received Chinese soldiers for training courses and that Peru and Chile have contributed to the development of bilateral military exercises. Besides, it is mentioned the Chinese commitment to the United Nations peacekeeping missions, such as the deployment of a contingent of military police to Haiti. Another example is China's hospital ship, which was offering health assistance to four countries in the Caribbean. However, the authors make it clear that even though military activities in the region are increasing, the highest percentage of Chinese intervention in Latin America is in economic matters.²²

The general strategy of China in the Indo Pacific

As China's 2015 Defense White Paper states in its preface, China declares itself opposed to pursuing a political position that is not for the sake of its development in peaceful terms, expressly indicating its opposition to hegemony or expansion²³. While it is true that it has increased its defense budget and has enlarged its armed forces, this is due to its need to achieve fundamentally social stability within its borders, strictly following the guidelines of the Chinese Communist Party. In the early 1990s, Deng Xiaoping resurrected an old idea called Tao Guang Yang Hui, to generate a constant stream of thought, which established the permanent framework of the strategy to follow in the years to come²⁴. In general terms, this concept rejects the search for global hegemony, guiding the way the nation prevails through growth and without assuming a position of global leadership that endangers its structures. Unlike Western thought, the Chinese mentality is governed by an idea that goes beyond transient declamation, seeking a continuity in

²² Evan R. Ellis, "The Security Dimension of Chinese and Indian Engagement in the Americas", in *Latin America and the Asian Giants*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 206-217.

²³ China Military Strategy (2015), 3, <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/China%E2%80%99s-Military-Strategy-2015.pdf>.

²⁴ Sun Bin, "Tao Guang Yang Hui as a strategy – is China a threat?", *Sun Bin* (blog), July 4, 2015, <http://sun-bin.blogspot.com/2005/07/tao-guang-yang-hui-as-strategy-is.html>.

time, which allows it to survive without challenging the dominant global power.²⁵ Of course, this notion does not imply that China does not want to recover its historical place as a protagonist on the world stage. On the contrary, China wants to do it in a calculated manner, safeguarding its security, establishing attainable goals, and without risking to challenge a higher power that can take everything from him. Therefore, it is fair to say that its objective is to strengthen itself as a leader in the region immediately under its influence, without ambitiously extending itself where it cannot compete. Moreover, the region where China wishes to reign with strength, is according to the Chinese Defense White Paper, "along with China's periphery."²⁶ In this regard, China perceives itself as a continentalist nation, despite being developing a credible navy, so that its interests reflect the desire to promote a relationship of relative stability with nations close to its centrality, both by land and by sea. This idea of continentalism is the reason why the developing of China was historically from the inside, and despite knowing and having the means to project beyond its coasts, never chose to venture into further waters.²⁷ Throughout the centuries, it has demonstrated that despite having the ability to enhance itself in the maritime environment, it chose to safeguard its borders and, promote the internal security and well-being of its inhabitants, without having to confront other ruling powers. The orientation of its policy was with an inclination towards the protection of its internal affairs rather than toward the control of maritime spaces²⁸. Currently, China needs to be strong, an undisputed leader in territories that claim as its own, maintaining a defensive position, away from any idea of global expansion. These two concepts that seem disconnected evidence a historically pattern recognizable in the motivations

²⁵ Sun Bin, "Tao Guang Yang Hui as a strategy – is China a threat?"

²⁶ China Military Strategy (2015), 12.

²⁷ Christopher D. Yung, "Fixed Menu or A La Carte?: Chinese Strategic Culture and a Menu of Strategic Options" in Matthew Slater, ed., *The Possibilities and Limitations of Strategic Culture: A Comparative Approach*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2019 forthcoming), 6.

²⁸ Christopher D. Yung, "Fixed Menu or A La Carte?: Chinese Strategic Culture and a Menu of Strategic Options", 8.

of China to prosper that could help with the problem posed. On the one hand, the reorganization through economic development, fostered by Deng Xiaoping, was based on a principle of non-confrontation, overcoming through the opening of markets and the acceptance of maintaining the ultimate goal of not allowing itself to discuss global supremacy. On the other hand, the recognition in its gestation as a nation of the strategic Chinese interests linked to the territorial spaces that assure China a privileged position in the Indo-Pacific region. In both cases, takes precedence the notion of "safeguarding the sovereignty and security of China's territorial land, air, and sea."²⁹ The sustained economic growth of China, as a pursued objective over forty years despite what happened with the fall of the Soviet Union, and the growing insistence of being recognized as a leader in its immediate sphere of influence, can be factors that explain the interest to recover the brilliance of past epochs in the Indo Pacific region. If these concepts are valid, then Latin America is only one part of a larger scheme that has its epicenter in the Indo Pacific but smaller ramifications in other parts of the globe. The interests of China in the region may be to the extent that they "provide access to the natural resources necessary to maintain the spectacular growth rates of the country."³⁰

At the end of the 1970s, with the help of Deng Xiaoping, China began taking the first steps to move from being an agrarian country to becoming an industrialized country. Ten years later, the guidelines of a three-stage plan were established to commit to the integral development of China within the framework of a careful and studied planning. As a result of this direction, China is currently going through a stage that will end in 2035 with the aim of building the

²⁹ China Military Strategy (2015), 5.

³⁰ Adriana Erthal Abdenur and Danilo Marcondes de Souza Nieto, "China's growing role in the South Atlantic", *Revista CIDOB d'Affairs Internacionals*, no.102-103 (2013):175, <https://doaj.org/article/39543fdeee9d4cf8b09fd36007fe9d50.pdf>.

foundations of a modern economy.³¹ In the same way, China pursues the goal of becoming a prosperous society for the centennial of the Chinese Communist Party in 2021, and in a modern socialist country when the centenary of the creation of the People's Republic of China in the year 2049 takes place.³² In order to strengthen its growth and position itself as a leader, in 2013 China expressed its intention to revitalize the Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road concepts. This initiative, which is the complement of an old terrestrial trade route added to a new maritime route, seeks the interconnection of infrastructure to link China as the epicenter, with the rest of Asia, the Indian Ocean, Africa, and Oceania. The Belt and Road Initiative is an ambitious project designed to enlarge China, highlight its splendor and raise its influence on the countries of the region.³³ In general terms, it is fair to say that the entire development effort has focused on generating commercial spaces in the vicinity of China, on boosting the exchange of goods in a relatively safe way, and to boost the growth planned by Deng Xiaoping. Southeast Asia is one of the least interconnected areas in the world, and this has been the opportunity that China has envisioned to inject its investments and push Asian exports to 28% global by the year 2030.³⁴

The Silk Road as a land communication road, historically united Asia with Europe since the times of the Roman Empire, more than two thousand years ago and its importance enhanced the integration of diverse cultures. Since the Han Dynasty declared its opening around 130 BC, bi-directional trade flowed with dynamism, increasing economic and cultural prosperity on both

³¹ Zhong Feiteng, "China's Grand Strategy in a new Era" *East Asia Forum* (2018):1, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/03/05/chinas-grand-strategy-in-a-new-era/>

³² China Military Strategy (2015), 7.

³³ Michael J. Green, "China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region", *Center for International and Strategic Studies* (2018):1, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-maritime-silk-road>.

³⁴ Michael J. Green, "China's Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region", 21.

sides, until the Ottoman Empire limited it in 1453³⁵. On the other hand, the Maritime Silk Road is part of a historical legacy, dating back to the times of the navigator and explorer Zheng He, who left his mark in the fifteenth century³⁶. The complementation of both is what has now been called the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In both cases, the historical significance and the weight that it entails for the Chinese national identity, the revitalization of two routes that enlarged various cultures for hundreds of years, explain the need to reaffirm the commitment of leading in the region. China sees itself as the center of a geographical space in which it shares borders with fourteen countries³⁷, so that perception is the sufficient incentive to exercise its leadership, influencing countries that surround it and extending its reach to those regions that can provide raw materials for their subsistence. Latin America is part of this category.

From the document called Assessment on U.S. Defense Implications of China's Expanding Global Access, China's military expansion has occurred in the vicinity of its waters of influence, but not much further than it allows to affect the conflict zones of the East and South Seas of China. The statement is related to the objective of guaranteeing a robust national defense, which in turn is related to its traditional strategic notion of "active defense" while allowing it to ensure its survival and strengthen its internal security as a nation³⁸. In the case of its global economic expansion, this is related to an intention to ensure its logistical support points, keeping its Maritime Communication Lines open, and allowing the uninterrupted flow of essential materials to sustain the rampant economic growth. That is how the Chinese Communist Party has set its tasks for the Armed Forces. The established responsibilities inherent to its functions are to safeguard the territory of China and protect its maritime interests related to energy and sources of

³⁵ Kent E. Calder, "Prospects for the China-Europe Relationship and Global Implications", *The Sasakawa Peace Foundation* (2016): 10, https://www.spf.org/jpus-j/img/investigation/SPF_20170810_02.pdf

³⁶ Kent E. Calder, "Prospects for the China-Europe Relationship and Global Implications", 52.

³⁷ Kent E. Calder, "Prospects for the China-Europe Relationship and Global Implications", 50.

³⁸ China Military Strategy (2015), 10.

resources. This endeavor, in the conviction of a China with strong economic ties with the countries in their immediate vicinity, is what guarantees the prosperous growth of the nation, and in the end, is what has driven China to stay in the Indo Pacific. Proof of this is in the significant Chinese investments in countries with port infrastructure, such as Pakistan and Djibouti, in order to ensure continuity of essential materials for their survival. In 2017, China inaugurated its first military base abroad in Djibouti, East Africa. By doing this, Doraleh's multipurpose port has allowed it to have a foothold in a sensitive area, close to oil supply routes and, for a long time, an area subject to acts of piracy³⁹. Although this act aroused alarms of expansion, it is fair to say that this is related to the need established in its Military Strategy to protect and strengthen the vital Maritime Communication Lines that unite China with the rest of the world. Regarding port infrastructure, roads, and rail infrastructure, China has invested more than 600 billion dollars in different peripheral regions, mostly related to the Belt and Road Initiative⁴⁰.

China in Argentina and the South Atlantic

Argentina and China established diplomatic and trade relations as of 1972, one year after Peru and two years after Chile. Mexico, Guyana, and Jamaica also recognized China in the same year. As part of the negotiations initiated in Romania, China demanded that Argentina accept Taiwan as an integral part of Chinese territory. This demand towards the rest of the Latin American countries was an instrument of the policy carried out by Beijing that continued even in the mid-2000s as a mandatory requirement for investments in the Caribbean countries.

Argentina chose to establish relations with China motivated in part by the visit of the American President Richard Nixon to China in 1972, and in part by the need to expand its

³⁹ Department of Defense, *Assessment on U.S. Defense Implications of China's Expanding Global Access*, Executive Summary.

⁴⁰ Department of Defense, *Assessment on U.S. Defense Implications of China's Expanding Global Access* (Washington, DC, Department of Defense, 2018), 14, <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jan/14/2002079292/-1/-1/1/EXPANDING-GLOBAL-ACCESS-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>

income from new markets.⁴¹ During the years 1973 and 1974, under the government of Juan Domingo Perón during the effects of the oil crisis, Argentina decided to intensify and strengthen ties with countries of socialist ideology. Since the beginning of trade relations, China had benefited from the purchase of wheat and maize from Argentina, increasing the trade balance from \$ 2.9 million to \$18 million in just two years, and then climbing to \$ 97 million in 1977. In 1980, the Argentine president Jorge Videla visited China, an opportunity that served to establish new trade agreements and scientific cooperation between the two countries. That decade witnessed two episodes that marked the history of the two countries: on the one hand the Malvinas War of 1982, also known as the Falklands Campaign, and on the other the brutal Chinese repression in Tiananmen Square. The quid pro quo here was the government of China supported the Argentine claim for the Falklands Islands, while the Argentine government chose not to condemn the Chinese military massacre in Tiananmen Square.

The year of 1991 marked the beginning of a joint initiative carried out by Argentina and Brazil, called the Common Market of the South (Mercosur), a regional trade organization that aimed to reduce cut tariffs and promote trade. Mercosur attracted Chinese investments as the region presented new opportunities for the incorporation of new technologies and economic development.⁴² During these years, in addition to cereals, Argentina exported commodities such as iron, silver, leather, vegetable oils and, seamless steel tubes, increasing its profits from 305 million dollars in 1991 to 607 million in 1995.⁴³ By 1993 Brazil acquired the status of a first strategic partner of China in Latin America, a position that Argentina would reach in 2004.⁴⁴ However, the 1990s witnessed an additional element of Chinese politics as the relationship

⁴¹ Jorge Eduardo Malena, "China and Argentina: Beyond the Quest for Natural Resources", 257.

⁴² Henrique Altamani Oliveras, "Argentina and Brazil: Toward an Atlantic Strategy?" in *Latin America and the Asian Giants*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 268.

⁴³ Jorge Eduardo Malena, "China and Argentina: Beyond the Quest for Natural Resources", 263.

⁴⁴ Henrique Altamani Oliveras, "Argentina and Brazil: Toward an Atlantic Strategy?", 274.

between senior military officers from Latin America intensified. Although during those years there was a fluid exchange of courtesy visits between military authorities and officials related to the Ministries of Defense of the respective countries, none of the military projects discussed ever came to fruition.⁴⁵

As previously mentioned, China found an opportunity to increase its influence in Latin America after the world financial crisis in 2008. While some countries were dragged down by the fall of the markets in the United States and Europe, Chinese money came to the rescue of nations that otherwise would not have been able to obtain monetary liquidity to face the crisis. Argentina had been struck economically since the end of the Malvinas/Falklands War. Additionally, since 2001 a complicated institutional situation resulted in the elections of a trend of populist governments that sympathized with China. First, it was the mandate of Nestor Kirchner who governed from 2003 to 2007, to be succeeded later by his wife, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner who governed two presidential mandates from 2007 to 2015. This turn of events allowed China the possibility of winning bids for investments and forming joint ventures in areas such as telecommunications, shipping logistics, port management, electronics manufacturing and fishing and seafood processing.⁴⁶ Specifically, fishing is the item that generates more interest in the Chinese motivation to expand in Argentina. The peculiarities of the Argentine Sea, which includes the warm current of Brazil and the cold current of Malvinas, establish the best conditions for the development of various marine species that attract fishing fleets from Spain, China, and South Korea.⁴⁷ China, which has the largest fishing fleet in the world, with around 2900 fishing boats, is one of the nations that persistently take advantage of the gray areas

⁴⁵ Jorge Eduardo Malena, "China and Argentina: Beyond the Quest for Natural Resources", 264.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 267.

⁴⁷ Damián Profeta, *Argentina, the next battleground for illegal fishing* (London, UK: chinadialogue Ocean, March, 2018), <https://chinadialogueocean.net/1366-argentinas-battleground-against-illegal-fishing-2/>.

between international waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone of Argentina to develop its activities of catching illex or Argentine shortfin squid.⁴⁸ However, the growing demand to feed the ever-growing large Chinese population has put pressure on China to build a port in Uruguay that will allow it to speed up logistics for the processing of catches of squid and other species.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, the presence of China in the South Atlantic, and precisely in Argentina, may be related to another Chinese strategic aspiration for consolidation of global leadership. Regardless of the gains obtained with the development of the Belt Road Initiative, China is aware that the containment of the United States and its allies in the Indo Pacific is limiting its efforts in the region, so it is permanently searching for alternatives to its trade routes in order to avoid having its supply options strangled.⁵⁰ Therefore, the Chinese have anticipated that whoever has a greater presence in the poles, especially in Antarctica, will have greater control over the rest of the regions of the world. Since 1985, when China installed its first scientific base in King George Island, Antarctica, close to a sector claimed by Argentina, China has shown an increasing interest in developing in the so-called White Continent. Conscious of being in a region where sovereignty rights do not exist, the Chinese have made it clear that their intentions go beyond the scientific purposes given their pretensions to become a global polar power and to position themselves strategically in a continent with extraction restrictions of minerals and resources until the year 2048.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Gustavo Arias Retana, "Voracity of Chinese Fishing Vessels Threatens Latin American Seas", *Diálogo Digital Military Magazine*, December 2018, <https://dialogo-americas.com/en/articles/voracity-chinese-fishing-vessels-threaten-latin-american-seas>

⁴⁹ Gabriel Lira, "Compañía China quiere Puerto en Montevideo", *Construcción Latinoamericana*, November 2018, <https://www.construccionlatinoamericana.com/compania-china-quiere-puerto-en-montevideo/135867.article>.

⁵⁰ Anne-Marie Brady, *China's Expanding Interest in Antarctica: Implications for New Zealand*, (Canberra, Australia: Australian Policy Strategic Institute, August 2017), 14, <https://www.aspi.org.au/report/chinas-expanding-interests-antarctica>.

⁵¹ Andrea Herbert, "China and Antarctica: Hot ambitions in an icy climate" (Postgraduate Certificate, University of Canterbury, 2017), 3, University of Canterbury, <https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/13826>.

One possibility is that China is preparing itself from a position of advantage in Antarctica should the revision of the Madrid Protocol, the instrument that prohibits oil and mining activity, be favorable in any way for all the member countries of the Antarctic Treaty System. According to researchers from the Polar Research Institute of China, between 300 and 500 billion tons of natural gas and 500 billion tons of oil could potentially be in Antarctica.⁵² While it is possible for China to try to increase its influence over Argentina to develop future projects to support its interests in Antarctica, currently four of its five bases are oriented towards Oceania, while their logistics infrastructure moves around distribution centers in New Zealand and Australia.⁵³ On the other hand, Argentina was the first country to logistically support a Chinese expedition on the White Continent in 1984.⁵⁴ However, after that initial contact, there has been little exchange between the two countries after China developed its Antarctic expansion near the bases of Australia and New Zealand. It is over those countries which China has been exerting some pressure regarding fisheries and scientific research. Because of the need for sustaining its Antarctic operations, China relies on Oceania to move towards Antarctica and is in that corridor that focuses the provision of its five bases.

Aspects of Argentina's diplomacy

In 2009, through a memorandum of understanding between the two main state banking entities of China and Argentina, the two countries agreed that Argentina would swap the local currency and replace it with the Chinese currency. This way Argentina would have funds totaling approximately 10.2 billion dollars to deal with the 2008 financial crisis.⁵⁵ Although this

⁵² Anne-Marie Brady, "China's Expanding Interest in Antarctica: Implications for New Zealand" in *Small States and the Changing Global Order: New Zealand Faces the Future* (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, June 2017), <https://www.canterbury.ac.nz/media/documents/research/China's-expanding-Antarctic-interests.pdf>

⁵³ Anne-Marie Brady, "China's Expanding Interest in Antarctica: Implications for New Zealand", 9.

⁵⁴ Andrea Herbert, "China and Antarctica: Hot ambitions in an icy climate", 3.

⁵⁵ Jose Eduardo Malena, "China and Argentina: Beyond the Quest for Natural Resources" in *China Engages Latin America: Tracing the Trajectory* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 274.

measure seemed promising at that time, the experience would show that the benefits of the exchanges would have more value for China than for Argentina, and it would serve as a tool for China to exercise control over matters in Argentina.⁵⁶ Because of this risk, which generated a heated public debate, the presidential elections in 2015 resulted in Argentina's political shift to the right. The new administration began to review more carefully the agreements previously reached with China during the Kirchner governments. Being contractually bound to these agreements, the government of President Macri (2015-present) did not request help from China and opted for a policy of rapprochement with the United States and its allies. In this way, Argentina limited the influence that China could exert through its financing system and agreed to the IMF terms for 57.1 billion dollars, with a progressive disbursement until the year 2021.⁵⁷

On the other hand, as pointed out by the researchers of the two books analyzed previously here, the biggest obstacle that China has in Latin American is having to resolve issues with governments that are no longer ideologically aligned to China as they were in the past decade. In the political sphere, only Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Uruguay continue to have governments of left or center-left tendencies, while the remaining South American countries have turned to the right or the center-right.⁵⁸

The deepening of the relationship established initially in 1972, and the arrival of Chinese capital in different infrastructure projects from 2004 to 2015 coincided with the emergence of leftist-populist governments in several South American countries, including Argentina. In the

⁵⁶ Mauricio Mesquita Moreira and Theodore Kah, "Future Scenarios for Latin America's Relations with China and India" in *Latin America and the Asian Giants*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 299.

⁵⁷ International Monetary Fund, "IMF and Argentina Authorities Reach Staff-Level Agreement on First Review Under the Stand-By Arrangement", news release, September 26, 2018, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2018/09/26/pr18362-argentina-imf-and-argentina-authorities-reach-staff-level-agreement>.

⁵⁸ CNN en español, "México a la izquierda y Brasil a la derecha: Así está el mapa político de América Latina en el 2019", January 3, 2019, <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2019/01/03/mexico-a-la-izquierda-y-brasil-a-la-derecha-asi-esta-el-mapa-politico-de-america-latina-en-2019/>.

case of the latter, the economic crisis of 2001 favored the rapprochement with China mainly during the governments of the two Kirchner presidents.⁵⁹ Despite having been considered by China as one of the seven countries called strategic partners of Latin America⁶⁰, the current government reoriented the foreign relations of the Argentine Republic in favor of the United States and its allies while limiting the possible interference of the Asian country⁶¹. Respecting what was agreed by the previous government, the new political leadership, however, was able to get the Chinese government to accept an additional protocol that would guarantee the peaceful use of the Deep Space Antenna.⁶² This reorientation, which has helped Argentina get closer to the United States, has also motivated Argentina to lessen its commitment to organizations formed by the so-called “Bolivarian countries” led by Venezuela, that joined leftist governments that favored Chinese capital. Therefore, Argentina is currently more vested in the Organization of American States (OAS) to the detriment of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), which excludes the United States, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), which also excludes the United States.⁶³ This shift of policy, adopted by President Macri, leaves little room for Chinese maneuvers that may go beyond economic, demonstrating a precise alignment with the interests of the United States and its other allies in the region⁶⁴.

The Chinese also use the sale of arms as a tool to foster their economic growth and increase their influence in the region. Latin America hampered the Chinese ability to "promote

⁵⁹ Jose Eduardo Malena, “China and Argentina: Beyond the Quest for Natural Resources”, 268.

⁶⁰ Evan R. Ellis “The Strategic Context of China’s Advance in Latin America: An update”, *Asia Centre* (2018):4, http://centreasia.hypotheses.org/files/2017/08/17-Ellis-Ame%CC%81rique-Latine_180417.pdf.

⁶¹ Eduardo Daniel Oviedo, “Argentina: alternancia política y política exterior”, *China Hoy* (2017):41, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322656422_Argentina_alternancia_y_politica_exterior_La_relacion_con_China_durante_el_mandato_del_presidente_Mauricio_Macri.

⁶² Eduardo Daniel Oviedo, “Argentina: alternancia política y política exterior”, 42.

⁶³ Evan R. Ellis “Argentina at the crossroads again: Implications for the United States and the region”, *Military Review* (2017):35, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/March-April-2017/ART-006/>.

⁶⁴ Evan R. Ellis “Argentina at the crossroads again: Implications for the United States and the region”, 35.

itself politically and achieve a certain degree of support.”⁶⁵ The limited acceptance of Chinese military equipment is mostly due to its low quality, its limited capacity to ensure a credible logistics chain behind those sales, and the "lack of military presence in the region" that ensures continuity in the maintenance of the equipment once sold. It is important to note that the limited impact of Chinese arms sales in the region has been due to difficulties presented in the provision of spare parts and supplies, and the total absence of technology transfer from China to the buyer countries. Although China is the fifth world supplier of defense equipment, most of its export production goes to the countries of the Indo-Pacific region, with a smaller scope in Latin America.⁶⁶ In the latter, Chinese companies have mostly managed to sell military clothing, light weapons, and other minor supplies. Where China has made a significant difference has been in those countries with strong ideological alignment, such as Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, which could provide in return sources of energy supply at low cost. For the case of those mentioned, China managed to sell radar systems (Venezuela and Ecuador), combat aircraft and helicopters (Venezuela and Bolivia), military transport aircraft (Venezuela), military land vehicles (Ecuador), and amphibious vehicles and rockets launchers (Venezuela).⁶⁷ Argentina did not purchase Chinese war material, not even during the period of higher ideological affinity.⁶⁸ As testified by Jane's Journal report, Argentina's defense equipment originates from many Western nations. It ranges from German destroyers and submarines, French and American aircraft, Italian, Swedish and Americans cannons, and portable armaments of the United States. Regardless of the economic bonanza that linked China and Argentina since the official

⁶⁵ Evan R. Ellis "China – Involucramiento Militar en América Latina", *Air & Space Power Journal* (2012): 49, http://www.au.af.mil/au/afri/aspj/apjinternational/apj-s/2012/2012-2/2012_2_05_ellis_s.pdf.

⁶⁶ Department of Defense, *Assessment on U.S. Defense Implications of China's Expanding Global Access*, 5.

⁶⁷ Evan R. Ellis, "The Security Dimension of Chinese and Indian Engagement in the Americas", in *Latin America and the Asian Giants*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 207.

⁶⁸ Evan R. Ellis, "The Security Dimension of Chinese and Indian Engagement in the Americas", 208.

recognition of 1972, Argentina's defense budget was only 0.9% of its GDP, a figure that has remained within this limit since the year 2004.⁶⁹ In any case, and in line with current times, the increase in the defense budget as of 2016 is being used both for modernization and for the acquisition of new military equipment, including aircraft and military vehicles from the United States⁷⁰ and ocean patrol vessels from France. Regarding arms sales, China has not been able to strengthen its sales to Argentina either.

China also utilizes military exchange and training programs to expand its presence in the region, to make compatible the doctrines of the Chinese Communist Party and to influence the adoption of concepts that are of interest to its Armed Forces.⁷¹ In the case of Argentina, this initiative was short-lived, limited to the period that began in 2005 with bilateral visits among high-ranking officials, and which ended with the change of government in 2015. During that time, less than ten visits took place, including that of the Argentine Minister of Defense.⁷² Also from 2005 to 2015, China offered short courses such as the "Military Doctrine and National Defense for Chief Officers" that were canceled by the government of President Macri. With few exceptions, interruption of military education exchanges with historically friendly nations rarely took place. Argentina favors exchanges and military education of its officers in training and post-graduate schools in the United States, Germany, France, Spain, Brazil, Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and Uruguay.

China's primary interest is on being recognized as a significant player in the Indo-Pacific region. Therefore, military exercises with neighboring countries or those immediately adjacent to its area of influence are the norm. The only exercise carried out with a South American nation in

⁶⁹ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database", accessed January 12, 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

⁷⁰ Evan R. Ellis "Argentina at the crossroads again: Implications for the United States and the region", 31.

⁷¹ Department of Defense, *Assessment on U.S. Defense Implications of China's Expanding Global Access*, 6.

⁷² Jose Eduardo Malena, "China and Argentina: Beyond the Quest for Natural Resources", 270.

ten years was in 2016 with Brazil and was only circumscribed to a competition of patrols in the jungle.⁷³

Argentina historically has maintained its participation in international exercises led by the United States in Latin America, such as UNITAS or PANAMAX. The Argentine Armed Forces have understood that regional cooperation in common security matters favors the interoperability and compatibility of military equipment, establishing standardized procedures that ensure the timely execution of different maneuvers. By 2019 Argentina is expected to participate in at least thirty military exercises of different characteristics, with the common denominator that among its participants there are not Asian military forces, and the United States leads all the exercises⁷⁴. Beyond the protocol visits that some Chinese warships have established in South America, or some minor training exercise, China's leading national interest and strategic goals lie in another region. Argentina has neither shown interest in incorporating procedures and concepts from this Asian country nor; has any interest in leaving aside decades of Western doctrine that has shaped its Armed Forces.

While it is true that China seeks recognition as a leading nation, it is appropriate to emphasize that its political purpose is the recognition of China as a guarantor of security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. In this way, the Chinese demonstrate confidence to their neighbors and deepen security ties in Asia. That is why it is difficult to appreciate an increase in military presence or military exchange in Latin America, as can be seen in South Asia or Central Asia.

⁷³ Department of Defense, *Assessment on U.S. Defense Implications of China's Expanding Global Access*, 11.

⁷⁴ Infobae, "El Ministerio de Defensa autorizó fondos para hacer más de 30 operativos militares con fuerzas extranjeras" <https://www.infobae.com/politica/2019/01/11/el-ministerio-de-defensa-autorizo-fondos-para-hacer-mas-de-30-operativos-militares-con-fuerzas-extranjeras/>

Conclusion

China has managed to extend its influence beyond the Indo Pacific, making its way in every corner of the world. China focuses on being the dominant leader of its regional area of influence. Nevertheless, China has obtained substantial benefits from other regions, including Latin America that has provided raw materials and commodities to sustain the growing demand of its population. Initially, with a continental mentality, concerned with solving internal security problems, China views its historical role in the Indo-Pacific region a dominant one. China created a terrestrial and maritime regional infrastructure architecture called The Belt and Road Initiative that promotes and increases Chinese trade with the rest of the world. It is fair to say now that this is an initiative that has managed to expand towards Europe, Oceania, and Latin America and that has a future projection to the Poles.

On the other hand, China has been trading with countries of Latin America since the beginning of the 1970s when several South American nations recognized its communist regime. The 2008 financial crisis coincided with the emergence of left-leaning government aligned with the Chinese ideology. This situation granted China the opportunity to increase its influence in this region and also guarantee access to raw materials and food supply. In the case of Argentina, the lending of Chinese capital allowed access to credit outside the harsh terms from the western funding system. China's soft-power approach through financing facilitated the establishment, years later, of the Deep Space Antenna Station in Argentine territory. In areas of interest in Argentina, from the mid-1980s to the present, China has shown increasing interest in growing its participation in both the fisheries of the Argentine Sea and in the scientific bases of the Antarctic Continent. In both cases, motivated by the possibility of acquiring raw materials that ensure the survival of the Chinese people, China continued to influence and to lay the foundations for more

solid leadership. However, while the fishery resources that Argentina can offer are essential as a food source, it is the untapped resources in Antarctica that motivate China to continue to exert soft-power. Oil, minerals, and fishery resources are still protected by the Antarctic Treaty System, but this can be modified in the future to sustain Chinese growth.

The Chinese have concentrated their efforts to keep communication channels open in the Indo-Pacific through a more active presence in the White Continent, which seems to indicate their intention of not to being contained entirely in the jurisdictional waters of China. The main area of focus for the leadership of China is centered primarily in the Indo-Pacific region and ancillary in Antarctica. The presence of China in Latin America responds to the need to expand its influence, but the investment made in the South American countries is unmatched by the infrastructure developed in the ports of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The new right-leaning political orientation of the government of Argentina has employed several diplomatic tools to counteract the influence of China in the South American country. Having suffered first-hand the consequences of accepting funding from the Chinese system, the Argentines opted to rely on Western credit systems again and support their economic development with the help of agencies linked to the United States. Similarly, it suspended purchases of military equipment from China and again had the approval to acquire material in Europe and the United States. The orientation of the education of Argentine military personnel is related to the educational options presented by the partners of the United States. Finally, Argentina's Armed Forces maintain their doctrine procedures according to western standards.

Lastly, in addition to the fact that China's strategic motivation is primarily in the Indo-Pacific, Argentina has signaled that it will remain closer to the United States. Argentina has also proven it will limit the influence of China in its territory, as Argentina's main interest is to ensure

its close relations and interoperability with the United States, guaranteeing that the presence of China in the Argentine territory does not compromise its historical ties with the United States.

Concerning the Deep Space Antenna, no complete certainty can lead to the interpretation of its use for military activities such as those of electronic warfare. While it is true that there is a concern about their possible double employment, with documents like those of SOUTHCOM attesting, China has insisted on sending signals to the United States and its allies to the contrary. Therefore, for the time being, the evidence shows that the focus of China's interest is on guaranteeing a stable and secure periphery in the Indo-Pacific region and in avoiding a confrontation with the United States in remote areas such as Latin America, where China it is not yet logistically consolidated to challenge the supremacy of the United States. Otherwise, China will generate confrontational conditions for which the Chinese are in no position to face. To affirm categorically that the Deep Space Antenna is an imminent threat, is for the moment, to enter the speculative terrain, and that is what this work does not intend to do.

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