

The Slipping Linchpin:
The Evolution of Sino-Argentinian Relations and their Effect on American Hegemony in the
Western Hemisphere

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With one-fifth of the world's total area and nearly one-third of the world's population, China and Latin America and the Caribbean are crucial forces for world peace and stability.

-President Xi Jinping in an address to the Peruvian Congress, 22 Nov 2016¹

Over the last four decades, there has been a marked rise in Chinese governmental interest and action in Latin America. Since the introduction of China's Open Door Policy and the cessation of its political isolationism in the 1970s, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has rapidly spread out through the international community, exerting an often-alarming degree of soft power.² Whereas hard power seeks to express itself through military might, coercion, or forced financial ruin, soft power attempts to win over the hearts and minds of the populace and assumes a more popular and persuasive approach with the intent to push a shared agenda – integrating rather than compelling.³ In the case of the PRC and Latin America, this generally manifests itself with an infusion of Chinese capital to effectively buy the support of the Latin states. Driven by immense capital growth, technological advancement, and information distribution, the PRC's ability to influence the global economic structure – and thereby project its soft power into the region – has grown substantially over the past decade and is too formidable to ignore.⁴ Due to disregard for this growing stake of the PRC for this period – whether negligent or purposefully – the United States and its allies have allowed a dangerous accumulation of power that has reached a precipitous tipping point that it may prove unable to stop or reverse.

¹ “Quotable quotes from President Xi's speech at Peruvian Congress.” The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *Xinhua News Agency*. Nov 23, 2016. <http://www.scio.gov.cn/m/32618/Document/1520362/1520362.htm>.

² Adrian H. Hearn and José Luis León-Manríquez, eds., *China Engages Latin America: Tracing the Trajectory* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2011), 257.

³ Burcu Baykurt and Victoria De Grazia, eds., *Soft-Power Internationalism: Competing for Cultural Influence in the 21st-Century Global Order*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2021), 19-20.

⁴ R. Evan Lewis, *The Strategic Dimension of Chinese Engagement with Latin America* (Washington DC: William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, 2013), 34-35.

Much as the Portuguese did in their Indian Ocean colonization during the Age of Exploration, the Chinese have adopted similar economic lines of effort in order to exert their dominion over regions of the world. It is poignant to note that this form of informal empire is linked to and thrives under soft power techniques. Unlike Portugal, however, the PRC is at the pinnacle of economic competition and technology – thus, unlikely to be outcompeted at this stage – and is not limited by the logistical issues that plagued pre-globalized imperial powers. As such, the PRC has fostered what is tantamount to a sustainable modern-day trading empire, wherein – without the need to fire a single shot outside of their claimed territorial region – the PRC has garnered *de facto* and – where contractual obligations have been invoked – *de jure* control over copious swathes of the world, and thereby can exert their will and agenda. The PRC's expanding economic foothold does not appear to be slowing anytime soon within the realm of Latin America. Argentina has become a key target for the extension of the PRC's sphere of influence and represents the precipice on which the region is balanced – trending away from the United States and its interests. Chinese integration and domination of Argentinian economic and political realms threaten to shift the balance of power within Latin America, grant the PRC hegemonic influence in the Western Hemisphere, and ostracize relations with the United States within the region.

The PRC's sustained economic growth over the last four decades and its meteoric rise as one of the world's leading economic powers threatened to damage the economies of Latin American states which did not have the burgeoning manpower, nor the expanding markets needed to keep pace with the PRC.⁵ What originally appeared to be an externally forced revolution – in which markets attempted to restructure to remain competitive – in the early 2010s

⁵ Javier Santiso, ed., *The Visible Hand of China in Latin America* (Paris, France: Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development Publishing, 2007), 37.

has evolved into a full-blown subjugation of Latin markets by the Chinese. The PRC is dependent on external raw material resources and energy products – much of which they import from Latin American states – in order to feed their industrial economic machine.⁶ Furthermore, due to the vast areas of non-arable land within China – from the Gobi Desert to the mountainous Himalayas – the PRC is reliant on other breadbasket states for food security, with Argentina being notable as an agriproduct exporter. Understanding their food and resource insecurity, the PRC took steps to ensure continued access to these assets.

Arguably this should have placed the Latin American markets in a higher bargaining position. However, undifferentiated commodities – such as agriproducts and, specifically, cereals – are available from other regions that the PRC is economically involved in – namely African states. Argentina had already learned the lesson of attempting to force such commodities sales at untenable international rates in the years following the Second World War when President Juan Domingo Perón instituted his first Five Year Plan.⁷ Between 1948 and 1952, Argentina entered into an economic crisis that was exemplified by a fifty percent decrease in import capacity (funds available per annum for importation and exportation without government intervention or manipulation) – essentially, a metric of the poor health of the economic machine of Argentina.⁸ The fiscal irresponsibility of Perón's government – from all three of his terms – cast long shadows that Argentina's economists were not soon to forget. Rather than succumb to economic insignificance, many states embraced trade deals and

⁶ R. Evan Ellis, *U.S. National Security Implications of Chinese Involvement in Latin America* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute of Army War College, 2005), 2.

⁷ Claudio Belini, "Industrial Exports and Peronist Economic Policies in Post-War Argentina," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 44, no. 2 (May 2012), 289.

⁸ Belini, "Industrial Exports and Peronist Economic Policies in Post-War Argentina.," Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Latin America and the World Economy: The Capacity to Import," *United Nations Economic Survey of Latin America, 1957*, 65-66, 72.

partnerships with the PRC – effectively enabling Chinese puppeteering from across the Pacific and forfeiting much of the bargaining power implicit in having a surplus of exports. As such, the PRC has created a pecuniary interdependence from many states in Latin America, whereby exportation to China buoys their economies and a potential withdrawal of Chinese funds may likely lead to collapse. While this implies a parasitic relationship, those Latin states’ economies were generally bolstered to a certain extent due to Chinese interaction.⁹ However, it is important to note that this translated to a growth in economic infrastructure and processes and that much of Sino-Latin American trade is characterized by trade deficits that negatively impact the Latin market.¹⁰

Argentina remains one of the last states within Latin America to not be fully intertwined with the Chinese economic machine, with Chinese trade accounting for only 14 percent of Argentina’s total annual trade as recently as 2019.¹¹ However, this will not last for long as the PRC is actively courting Argentina to become a major trade partner. As one of the eponymous ABC states of Latin America – Argentina, Brazil, and Chile – known for their strong economic and political power projection, Argentina is a desirable prize for the PRC. To emphasize these states’ importance, Argentina was ranked third for gross domestic product in 2021 – with Brazil being first and Chile fourth – and as the second strongest military power – after Brazil – in 2022.¹² Both Brazil and Argentina have substantial landmasses, and all three states have

⁹ Santiso, *The Visible Hand of China in Latin America*, 37.

¹⁰ Hearn and León-Manríquez, *China Engages Latin America*, 94-95.

¹¹ Diana Roy, “China’s Growing Influence in Latin America,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, Apr 12, 2022, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/china-influence-latin-america-argentina-brazil-venezuela-security-energy-bri.

¹² Teresa Romero, “Gross domestic product (GDP) in Latin America and the Caribbean in 2021, by country,” *Statista*, Oct 17, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/802640/gross-domestic-product-gdp-latin-america-caribbean-country/#:~:text=Brazil%20and%20Mexico%20were%20the,almost%201.3%20trillion%20U.S.%20dollar>; “Latin American Military Poweres Ranked (2022),” *Global Fire Power*, 2022, <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing-latin-america.php>.

valuable exports and resources that interest the PRC. Furthermore, before the advent of the Organization of American States (OAS) after the Second World War, the United States often conducted international relations actions through these three states – as evidenced by the joint mediation conference of the Ecuadorian-Peruvian War in 1942 – demonstrating their importance on a hemispheric – if not global – stage.¹³ Argentina, Brazil, and Chile were also driving actors for the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance of 1947 – the Rio Treaty – that was the precursor and impetus for the founding of the OAS, exemplifying their political salience in the region.¹⁴ Thus, it is advantageous for the PRC to secure integrated relations with all three of these states – all of which have a long history of economic and political ties with the United States. Whereas the United States used to be a more prominent trade partner than the PRC with the ABC states, the Chinese have surpassed the United States in economic standing – outpacing the United States with Chile in 2007, Brazil in 2009, and Argentina in 2013.¹⁵ Considering the PRC’s soft power tactics, this predisposes them to a higher position of influence in the region – likely at the expense of the United States – especially as the PRC has not and does not look likely to stop infusing moneys and investment capital into Latin America.

Currently, the PRC is Chile’s number one trade partner representing 34 percent of total trade, making the two states inextricably tied, while Brazil is a member of the BRICS – Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa – economic bloc, with PRC trading accounting for 28 percent

¹³ Georg Maier, “The Boundary Dispute Between Ecuador and Peru.” *The American Journal of International Law* 63, no. 1 (Jan, 1969), 43.

¹⁴ “B-29: Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (Rio Treaty of 1947),” *Department of International Law, OAS*, 2022, <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/signs/b-29.html>.

¹⁵ “Chile Trade Summary, 2007,” *World Integrated Trade Solution*, Oct 27, 2022, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/CHL/Year/2007/SummaryText>; “Brazil Trade Summary, 2009,” *World Integrated Trade Solution*, Oct 27, 2022, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/BRA/Year/2009/SummaryText>; “Argentina Trade Summary, 2013,” *World Integrated Trade Solution*, Oct 27, 2022, <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/ARG/Year/2013/SummaryText>.

of their total commerce.¹⁶ As of September 2022, Argentina has made official overtures to enter BRICS, something that will contractually link the state to the PRC.¹⁷ Chinese perception of contract law – with respect to international relations – is that all parties are equal members but that they are also equally obliged to the legal ramifications of multilateral decisions.¹⁸ In other words, the PRC expects decisions that are agreed upon by BRICS – a multilateral international economic organization – to be binding and adhered to by all members. Thus, if the PRC – the largest economic force within BRICS – can push through Chinese-favorable policies, the expectation would be that all other member states would follow through with those decisions. With all three of the influential ABC states formally tied to the Chinese economy, the PRC’s hegemony of the region will be far more secure and far more likely to interrupt and block the United States’ influence in Latin America. Thus, Argentina represents the linchpin for the PRC’s economic dominance and foothold in Latin America.

American policymakers and senior leaders – both political and within the military – have keenly focused their efforts on other regions of the world over the last twenty years, namely Southwest Asia. As the PRC expands and ramps up its militarization while the conflicts in the Middle East deescalate, the National Defense Strategy (NDS) – released in March of 2022 – has explicitly called for a shift in focus to the Indo-Pacific as the primary and dominant theater of concern for future conflict, with the PRC being a substantial, peer threat.¹⁹ It is important to acknowledge that the 2022 NDS was not the first time this transition to the Indo-Pacific was

¹⁶ Roy, “China’s Growing Influence in Latin America.”

¹⁷ ““Si usted fuera argentino, sería peronista”, le dijo Alberto Fernández a Xi Jinping en China,” *La Nación – Política*, Feb 6, 2022, <https://www.lanacion.com.ar/politica/si-usted-fuera-argentino-seria-peronista-le-dijo-alberto-fernandez-a-xi-jinping-en-china-nid06022022/>.

¹⁸ Rostam J. Neuwirth, Alexandr Svetlicinii, and Denis De Castro Halis, eds., *The BRICS-Lawyers’ Guide to Global Cooperation*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 258.

¹⁹ “Fact Sheet: 2022 National Defense Strategy,” *US Department of Defense*, Mar 2022, <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Mar/28/2002964702/-1/-1/1/NDS-FACT-SHEET.PDF>.

called for, with the 2012 NDS referring to a “necessity [to] rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region” and the 2018 NDS directly acknowledging a need “to deter [PRC] aggression in...the Indo-Pacific,” and fostering a “free and open Indo-Pacific” while still focusing on other regions of the world.²⁰ This ten years of transition demonstrates that the United States has been slow to act in focusing its effort towards the PRC and Indo-Pacific, placing it well behind the power curve for upcoming potential conflicts.

The 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) – released in October – further acknowledges that the PRC has the will and means to reshape the Indo-Pacific in an effort to expand its sphere of influence – leveraging it to become the world’s leading power.²¹ However, the insidious nature of Chinese influence within Latin America cannot be overlooked – especially with its proximity to the United States – and the growing sentiments, specifically between the PRC and Argentina are noteworthy and disturbing, with American strategy lagging behind its designated pacing threat. This paper will endeavor to demonstrate to American senior leaders and policymakers just how severe a threat the PRC can be by establishing a lasting foothold in Latin America and how it is to the United States' peril to continue to allow these actions to go unopposed.

ORIGINS AND SYMPATHIES: SHARED EXPERIENCES, POLITY, AND FUNDS BETWEEN THE PRC AND ARGENTINA

Si usted fuera argentino, sería peronista.

[If you were Argentine, you would be a Peronist].

-President Alberto Fernández to President Xi Jinping²²

²⁰ “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” *Department of Defense NSS Archive*, Jan 2012, https://nssarchive.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf; “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy,” *Department of Defense Portal*, 2018, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

²¹ “National Security Strategy,” *The White House, Washington*, Oct 2022, 23, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

²² “Si usted fuera argentino, sería peronista.”

It is relevant to acknowledge that President Fernández of Argentina has openly stated that President Xi would be a Peronist if he was an Argentinian. Peronism is an ambiguous yet poignant aspect of the Argentinian political identity that dates back to the political machinations of Juan Domingo Perón, who was president of Argentina from 1946 to 1955 – before being deposed and exiled – and again from 1973 until his death in 1974. Originally a populist movement that synthesized aspects of both individualistic capitalism and collectivist socialism – as well as integrating aspects of autocracy and working-class movements – Peronism has devolved heavily since Perón’s death. This distortion is to such a degree that political scientists and historians have difficulty encapsulating and classifying modern Peronism on the political spectrum.²³ However, as Peronism is and has been the dominant political system within Argentina – in some iteration – for more than seventy years, this comment from President Fernández to President Xi should not be dismissed and should raise hackles in military and political leaders within the United States. It is also noteworthy and demonstrative of their close relationship that President Fernández was one of the first global leaders to publicly congratulate President Xi on his October 2022 reelection for an unprecedented third term as President of the PRC.²⁴ Claiming that President Xi would be a Peronist – while in actuality being more ambiguous than President Fernández intended – creates a fraternalism between the two states

²³ Paul H. Lewis, “Was Perón a Fascist? An Inquiry into the Nature of Fascism.” *The Journal of Politics* 42, no. 1 (Feb, 1980): 242, 251; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 146; F.J. McLynn, “The Ideology of Peronism: The Third Way and the Law of the Excluded Middle,” *Government and Opposition* 19, no. 2 (Spring, 1984): 193-194.

²⁴ “Argentine president Fernandez praises Xi on his reelection and “impressive achievements,”” *MercoPress*, Oct 25, 2022, <https://en.mercopress.com/2022/10/25/argentine-president-fernandez-praises-xi-on-his-reelection-and-impressive-achievements>.

that ties the foreign power of the PRC to the most deeply embedded political precepts of Argentina. This statement should not be taken lightly.

Peronism – as both a term and a party affiliation – has significantly changed in Argentina since its inception in the 1940s and 50s. While originally representing Perón’s Justicialist movement and having a somewhat defined ideological base, the term Peronism is now applied to all aspects of the political spectrum with a heavily muddied ideology. It is necessary to acknowledge that Argentina is not currently a single-party state, as is the PRC. However, the vast majority of the extant parties – regardless of left or right position on the political spectrum – claim to be Peronist in their nomenclature or their affiliation. This means that whether a citizen votes conservatively or liberally, they likely are voting for a “Peronist” candidate regardless of party. The ideologies of Peronism have devolved and decentralized, but the idea of Perón and Peronism continues to drive votes, with nostalgia, sentimentality, and feelings leading to ballot success rather than platforms and legislation.²⁵ Therefore, politicians of all types utilize the Peronist name to ensure election and maintain incumbency. Peronism and Perón are inextricably Argentine and have become a leading modern identity within the international community.

Empathizing and establishing kindred sentiments on this level between Argentina and the PRC only further expose Argentina to the PRC’s influence while further disconnecting the effects that the United States can affect. Fernández’s state visit to the PRC in February of 2022 demonstrated a fraternal and genial relationship between the leaders of the PRC and Argentina, as well as a shared understanding of each other’s state and goals. In that visit, President Fernández thanked the PRC for its help during the Coronavirus pandemic and pledged further economic interaction, stating a continued commitment to the Belt and Road Initiative and

²⁵ Patrick Gillespie, “In Argentina, Perón’s Legacy is Whatever You Need it to Be,” *Bloomberg*, Aug 9, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-08-09/argentina-s-politics-are-still-dominated-by-peron>.

officially requesting consideration for Argentina's entry into BRICS.²⁶ Perhaps most concerning, President Xi heavily implied a connectedness and similitude between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Justicialist (Peronist) government of Argentina.²⁷ Such state visits and official communiques grant insight into the state of relations between these two states and are useful for predicting the impact of future bilateral relations between the PRC and Argentina. The unfortunate reality is that the closer Argentina gets to the PRC, the more influence the PRC will have in the region. Whether or not this will affect US-Argentinian relations – either with negative actions or simply a chilling of relations – is yet to be seen. However, the current bilateral trade agreements that exist between the United States and Argentina – which have been reiterated over the last decade – would be a likely line of effort for the PRC to make inroads to remove American influence, either through eliminating the protection of free trade agreements (targeted against the United States), high protective tariffs, or simply outbidding and out-investing the United States.²⁸

The government of the PRC does not represent true communism and whether it ever did is up for debate. While it officially espouses an iteration of Marxist-Leninist ideology, in function the PRC is an autocratic single-party state, in which the controlling party does not observe the goals of communism and instead utilizes a synthesis of authoritarian capitalism combined with militant nationalism.²⁹ The bottom line is that the CCP exists to maintain its control over the people and the state. As such, in its modern form, the CCP has evolved into a

²⁶ "Si usted fuera argentino, sería peronista."

²⁷ "Si usted fuera argentino, sería peronista."

²⁸ "Argentina – Country Commercial Guide," *Department of Commerce – International Trade Administration*, Aug 4, 2022, <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/argentina-trade-agreements>.

²⁹ Tomasz Kamusella, "How China combined authoritarianism with capitalism to create a new communism," *The Conversation*, Oct 26, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/how-china-combined-authoritarianism-with-capitalism-to-create-a-new-communism-167586>.

more straightforward bureaucratic autocracy. This is in line with Argentina, which is not truly Peronist anymore. In fairness, Peronism – and its progenitor, Justicialism – has always at its core been a system designed to maintain its governmental control through the appeasement and placation of the populace. Popularity, rather than fiscal responsibility, idealism, or efficacious foreign policy, was used as the primary means of maintaining a hold on the government – thus, populism.

To this end, the PRC is popular with populist states in Latin America, as its “communist” revolution origins grant it a historical position as a “leader of the developing world” and advocate for the working people.³⁰ As Perón found his original success with the lower and working classes – *descamisados* – it logically follows that Argentina – fueled by nostalgia for the Perón years – would find similarity and empathy for states that espouse – regardless of action – support for the working man. From his exile in Spain, Perón publicly sympathized with the Chinese revolution and the Maoist government, likely affecting public support for these Chinese movements even while in absentia.³¹ When Perón returned to Argentina and reclaimed the presidency in 1973, he established bilateral trade relations and extended political overtures with the PRC, as he sought to establish more friendly relations with global socialist states.³² Argentinian popular support for the PRC was also further engendered during the 1960s and 1970s when the Chinese supported the Argentinian claim to the Malvinas Islands in the United Nations General Assembly.³³

³⁰ Ellis, *The Strategic Dimension of Chinese Engagement with Latin America*, 38.

³¹ Rubén Laufer, “Argentina,” *The People’s Map of Global China*, Feb 23, 2022, <https://thepeoplesmap.net/country/argentina/>.

³² He Li, *Sino-Latin American Economic Relations*, (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1991), 45.

³³ Osaru Omosigho, “China’s Relationship With Argentina Goes Far Beyond the Falklands/Malvinas Dispute,” *The Diplomat*, Feb 25, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/chinas-relationship-with-argentina-goes-far-beyond-the-falklands-malvinas-dispute/>.

The Peronist state originally sought to “maximize production, not for profit” but through the guidance of the government as a means to provide and “benefit...all the inhabitants of [Argentina].”³⁴ This is eerily similar to the CCP’s stated desire to “[develop] the productive forces to meet the people's expectation for a better life” from their centennial release.³⁵ Furthermore, the founding principles that Perón espoused – anti-imperialism, populist nationalism, and workers’ rights, among others – somewhat align with that of the PRC, as it is an autocratic state devoted to non-imperialist national security, with strong militant nationalism, and a socialist worker state. When examining the growing relationship between the PRC and Argentina, it is necessary to analyze the historical and political origins that allow for a mutual understanding within the current zeitgeist.

While the political effects of the Peronist system should not be overlooked in the linkages they enable for the PRC, it would be imprudent to not examine Peronism’s effect on the Argentinian economic situation. Many economists argue that Perón’s fiscal irresponsibility as president has cast a long shadow on Argentina that has persisted into their modern economy.³⁶ Between 1950 and 1980 this mismanagement manifested itself with 12 years of recession due to negative gross domestic product growth and three years in which positive gross domestic product growth did not outpace population growth rates.³⁷ While the Argentinian economy experienced a resurgence in the 1990s and early 2000s, the damages of these three decades were still apparent. Currently, Argentina is at risk of exceeding sixty percent inflation, with economists

³⁴ McLynn, “The Ideology of Peronism: The Third Way and the Law of the Excluded Middle,” 197.

³⁵ “Full Text: The CPC: Its Mission and Contributions,” *XinhuaNet*, Aug 26, 2021, http://www.news.cn/english/2021-08/26/c_1310149600.htm.

³⁶ Eduardo Singerman, “Perón’s Legacy: Inflation in Argentina, An Institutionalized Fraud,” *Forbes*, Jan 30, 2015.

³⁷ Katharina Buchholz, “The Countries Which Suffered Through Most Recession Years,” *Statista*, July 1, 2021, <https://www.statista.com/chart/19301/countries-with-most-years-in-recession/>.

predicting this spike by the end of 2022.³⁸ As such, Peronist fiscal irresponsibility has created an Argentine vulnerability to Chinese loaning and economic ties that the PRC has been more than happy to exploit through investing. This is just another example of Chinese execution of dollar diplomacy, in which their infusion of investment funding has directly garnered political capital.

Between 2005 and 2021, Argentina received an influx of over seventeen billion dollars of Chinese investment funds, funneled from both the China Development Bank and the China Import-Export Bank.³⁹ Moreover – demonstrating a massive increase in dedicated funds – the Belt and Road Initiative agreement that Argentina signed in February of 2022 obligated approximately twenty-four billion dollars of Chinese funds for financing and investment over the next five years – representing more than a four times annual increase in funding.⁴⁰ The PRC is also significantly outperforming the United States in overall traded capital with Argentina, with the PRC importing more than thirteen billion dollars and exporting six billion dollars in 2021, compared to the United States’ six billion dollars in imports and five billion dollars in exports.⁴¹ This represents a positive linear increase in overall trade for the PRC with Argentina over the last decade – excluding market decline due to COVID-19 in 2019 and 2020.⁴² This ramping up of investments and trade is commensurate with the greater focus that the PRC has been placing on Latin America over the last decade, and is telling for future plans for the region and Argentina.

³⁸ Ariel González Levaggi, “Argentina’s Embrace of China Should Be a Wake-Up Call,” *Foreign Policy Magazine*, May 23, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/23/argentina-china-us-imf-bri-debt-economy-summit-americas/>.

³⁹ “China’s Engagement with Latin America and the Caribbean,” *Congressional Research Service*, May 4, 2022, 2, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10982.pdf>.

⁴⁰ “What Will Argentina Gain From More Chinese Investment?” *The Dialogue: Latin American Advisor*, Feb 24, 2022, <https://www.thedialogue.org/analysis/what-will-argentina-gain-from-more-chinese-investment/>.

⁴¹ “Argentina Exports by Country,” *Trading Economics*, 2022, <https://tradingeconomics.com/argentina/exports-by-country>.

⁴² “Argentina Exports by Country.”

Argentina becoming more invested in the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative grants the PRC more agency to deepen Sino-Argentinian interdependence and economic interconnectedness, thereby helping secure raw materials and foodstuffs. Further infusions of capital and economic integration with PRC assets will likely edge out support from other entities such as the United States or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), whose loans come with – superficially – heavier stipulations and regulations.⁴³ The current Argentinian administration has plainly expressed a want to divorce itself from the IMF's loans, seeing PRC funds as a means to accomplish this.⁴⁴ These sentiments are only exacerbated by the debt of more than forty-five billion dollars owed to the IMF, as of the start of 2022.⁴⁵ The combination of rampant inflation, economic discord, and easily attained relief funds grants the PRC a desirable position from which to win over and influence Argentina.

ABC DOMINION: ARGENTINA AS THE LINCHPIN OF CHINESE HEGEMONY

The People's Republic of China harbors the intention and, increasingly, the capacity to reshape the international order in favor of one that tilts the global playing field to its benefit, even as the United States remains committed to managing the competition between our countries responsibly.

-US Department of Defense, 2022 National Security Strategy⁴⁶

Argentina is such a desirable ally to the PRC as it represents a key geopolitical domino for the rest of the Latin American region. Thus, the PRC is focusing much of its efforts in Latin America on Argentina in order to eventually influence the entire region, thereby rewriting itself as the regional hegemon. The PRC – among other efforts – has made use of Argentina's status

⁴³ Levaggi, "Argentina's Embrace of China Should Be a Wake-Up Call."

⁴⁴ Levaggi.

⁴⁵ Diana Roy, "Argentina: A South American Power Struggles for Stability," *Council on Foreign Relations*, Feb 7, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/argentina-south-american-power-struggles-stability>.

⁴⁶ "National Security Strategy," 2.

within Latin America to lobby within international agencies, affect foreign policy, and influence economic and social aspects. The PRC scored a major victory when Argentina rededicated itself to the Belt and Road Initiative in February of 2022, as this guaranteed direct PRC involvement in perpetuity. With Argentina's overtures requesting to join the BRICS economic bloc, the PRC has established a tangible advantage in growing Sino-Argentinian relations and, thereby, Latin American influence.

The PRC has taken steps to be present in the international organizations of Latin America, garnering observer status in the OAS.⁴⁷ While only being an observer, the PRC makes an effort to be an active member of the OAS and thereby, influence and lobby the politics of the region.⁴⁸ Per the OAS's Department of External and Institutional Relations, observer status grants several unique and noteworthy benefits, including insight into country needs – potential vulnerabilities – as well as “direct engagement and visibility [with the] 34 member states” – a forum for lobbying – and facilitates cooperation for observer's without a “presence in...the Western Hemisphere” – granting a legally-protected, political foothold.⁴⁹ Argentina is a major voice within the OAS, and having the proximity and access that observer status sanctions grants the PRC a useful tool for affecting Chinese influence. The PRC has taken steps not only to create bilateral treaties and agreements with states like Argentina but also made efforts to influence the global order. This behavior is befitting of a state that wishes to be the dominant superpower, as the PRC continues to insert itself into international agencies and discussions regardless of provenance or logic for their involvement. A great example of this behavior is the

⁴⁷ Ellis, *The Strategic Dimension of Chinese Engagement with Latin America*, 38.

⁴⁸ Ellis, 38-39.

⁴⁹ “Benefits of Partnering with the OAS,” *Department of External and Institutional Relations, OAS*, 2022, https://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/perm_observers/benefits.asp.

Chinese claims of being an “Arctic” or “near-Arctic state” and designs on establishing an Arctic Silk Road, despite having no bordering territory on the Arctic Ocean or Circle.⁵⁰

Besides being involved in international agencies, the PRC is also influencing Latin American foreign policy through its action and insertion into the region. Argentina – like Brazil and Chile – recognizes Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.⁵¹ Namely, Argentina acknowledges the concept of the PRC’s territorial integrity and the “One China Policy,” in which Taiwan is seen as a rogue Chinese province, rather than a sovereign state. The Argentinian position is painted by the Falklands War, seeing much the same relation between the arguments of Chinese-Taiwan and Argentine-Malvinas sovereignty.⁵² In this instance, the United States is at a disadvantage, as US-Argentinian relations were strained by American support of the United Kingdom’s claim to the Falklands (Malvinas) – with the United States supplying materiel support to the British war effort.⁵³ It is important to note that the issue of the sovereignty of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands is still current, as demonstrated in the November 2021 Regular Session of the OAS. In this session, a declaration was adopted stating that the question of sovereignty is a “matter of enduring hemispheric concern,” that the sovereignty discussion was in the vein of global decolonization, and that the OAS must “continue to examine the question of the Malvinas Islands...until a definitive settlement has been reached.”⁵⁴ This also demonstrates

⁵⁰ Maud Descamps, “The Ice Silk Road: Is China a “Near-Arctic-State”?,” *Institute for Security & Development Policy*, Feb, 2019, <https://isdpc.eu/publication/the-ice-silk-road-is-china-a-near-arctic-state/>.

⁵¹ Roy, “China’s Growing Influence in Latin America.”

⁵² “Argentina and China share “territorial integrity” concept. Pelosi’s trip to Taiwan “a provocation,” Argentine ambassador in Beijing,” *MercoPress: South Atlantic News Agency*, Aug 8, 2022, <https://en.mercopress.com/2022/08/08/argentina-and-china-share-territorial-integrity-concept.-pelosi-s-trip-to-taiwan-a-provocation-argentine-ambassador-in-beijing>.

⁵³ Robert Fo, “CIA files reveal how US helped Britain retake the Falklands,” *Evening Standard*, Apr 4, 2022, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/world/cia-files-reveal-how-us-helped-britain-retake-the-falklands-7618420.html>

⁵⁴ “Fifty-First Regular Session of the General Assembly - Guatemala City, Guatemala (Virtual),” *Organization of American States*, Nov 10-12, 2021, <https://www.oas.org/en/council/AG/regular/51RGA/>.

that the relationship between the United Kingdom and Argentina still suffers from some contention.

The PRC issued a public affirmation in February of 2022 – conspicuously on the same day that Argentina officially joined the Belt and Road Initiative – stating that they supported Argentina’s claim to full sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, which was quickly denounced by the United Kingdom.⁵⁵ From the outset, it would appear that this is the PRC’s rebuke of extant sentiments relating to the Monroe Doctrine, as at its core the PRC is integrating itself into Western Hemispheric issues and politics and usurping power that was traditionally held by the United States. However, this can be taken a step further to the point where the PRC installing itself in such a fashion – like a Western Hemisphere hegemon – is a callout to the international community, saying that if the Chinese government will not abide the situation in a region, they have the influence and power to do something about it regardless of international castigation or support. The sort of de facto and relational power this theoretically could grant the PRC is not an ideal situation for the United States, especially with the issue at hand being in the United States’ backyard within the Western Hemisphere.

The continuation of the Malvinas issue into the present day and the PRC’s support of Argentinian sovereignty claims almost guarantees the direction that the Argentinian government would go in support of the PRC should a hot conflict break out over Taiwan. Although the United States does not currently support any action that would usurp the current status quo of the “One China, Two Systems” structure, the historical parallelism is noteworthy and disserves the United States’ position when negotiating with Argentina. It is unlikely that Argentinian foreign policy will shift on this issue, leading them to presumably side with the PRC in the event of an

⁵⁵ Omosigbo, “China’s Relationship With Argentina Goes Far Beyond the Falklands/Malvinas Dispute.”

active conflict. In fact, a vast majority of the Latin American states – 25 of 33 – recognize the Chinese claim to Taiwan.⁵⁶ While it is difficult to know how Argentina’s support would manifest itself in the event of an active conflict relating to Taiwanese sovereignty – whether it be through financial or military support, or by publicly denouncing the United States – the position that Argentina takes will likely sway other states in the region – not because Latin America is a monolith, but because of the historical strength and voice that Argentina projects in the region – especially if Brazil and Chile follow suit. This just further emphasizes the benefit that securing Argentina – whether diplomatically, militarily, or economically – represents to the PRC and why the United States should be taking steps to prevent or mitigate Sino-Argentinian alliances.

Seeking to join BRICS and rededicating Argentina to the Belt and Road Initiative will have farther reaching effects on the rest of Latin America economically. One example of this will be in the fishing industry. The sinking of illegal fishing vessels – namely those from the Chinese fishing fleets – has been the practice within Argentina from 2016 to the present within the Argentinian exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of their territorial waters.⁵⁷ However, with a more legitimate investment in the Belt and Road Initiative and an integration into BRICS, it is likely that what was once seen as illegal fishing will no longer be illicit and become tolerated practice. Up until this point, Argentina has served as an unofficial gatekeeper, protecting this resource. With over three thousand nautical miles of fishable coast and a rich fishery, the Argentinian EEZ is a valuable asset for Latin America and unrestricted Chinese fishing will likely affect neighboring states. There will also likely be secondary effects if Argentina stops policing illegal fishing, such as non-sustainable harvesting which could lead to the collapse of

⁵⁶ Roy, “China’s Growing Influence in Latin America.”

⁵⁷ Frank Okata (Capt, USN), “To Counter China in Latin America, Focus on Argentina,” *US Naval Institute*, Aug 2022, <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2022/august/counter-china-latin-america-focus-argentina>.

one or more fisheries. With fishing being the most common occupation in Latin America and with fish being a valuable source of food in numerous states, the possibility of upsetting the fisheries could have lasting, dangerous effects on the region.⁵⁸ Many Latin American states also benefit financially from exporting fish and marine foodstuffs to the PRC. If the PRC were to increase its “domestic” harvesting of fishes – doubling down on its extractive economic practices and cutting out the middleman – then it could force Latin American states to become more dependent on the PRC, as the capital that those resources represented – that would have funneled directly to the benefit of the states – would evaporate from the region’s economic system.⁵⁹

Socially, another facet that should be considered is the growing population of Chinese expats that now live in Argentina. While this number hovered around two hundred thousand as of 2018, there has been a steady flow of new Chinese citizens emigrating to Argentina since the 1990s, with a major increase following the addition of Argentina to the PRC’s “Approved Destination Status” list for tourist destinations.⁶⁰ Chinese expats within Latin America number more than the combined amount living in Europe, Africa, and Oceania.⁶¹ Their population makes up the fourth largest demographic of immigrants within Argentina, and the largest non-Latin American group of immigrants.⁶² A growing population of native Chinese within the borders of Argentina – as well as other Latin states – could engender support for the PRC from

⁵⁸ Carlos Alberto Zúniga-González, ed., “The fisheries and aquaculture sector in Latin America: Exports to East Asia and production,” *National Library of Medicine*, Jul 26, 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9321368/#:~:text=Fishing%20is%20the%20most%20common,mst%20important%20traded%20food%20products>.

⁵⁹ Zúniga-González, “The fisheries and aquaculture sector in Latin America: Exports to East Asia and production.”

⁶⁰ Ellis, *U.S. National Security Implications of Chinese Involvement in Latin America*, 30.

⁶¹ “The Chinese community in Latin America,” *Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile - Asia Pacífico: Observatorio Parlamentario*, Nov 11, 2008, <https://www.bcn.cl/observatorio/asiapacifico/noticias/chinese-community-latin-america>.

⁶² Juan Pablo Cardenal, “Navigating Political Change in Argentina,” *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, edited by Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, (Washington DC: National Endowment for Democracy, 2017), 37.

the inside and help further drive a wedge between the United States and the region, especially in the realm of foreign policy. Argentina is recognized as the easiest state in the world to become a naturalized citizen, having no testing or language requirements and only mandating a two-year residency period.⁶³ Furthermore, Argentina does recognize dual citizenship and all naturalized citizens over 18 have the right and responsibility – compulsory by law – to vote. With an ever-growing Chinese population, domestic politics may eventually be affected internally by the citizenry in support of the PRC. As Argentina is demonstrably one of the most influential and powerful states of Latin America – as previously discussed – its position on future geopolitical conflicts is noteworthy and likely could affect the stances of other states in the region.

Argentina has demonstrated that it is much more in synchrony with the PRC than the United States would likely desire, magnified by its desired entrance into the BRICS bloc and its previous integration into the Belt and Road Initiative. While the United States currently maintains a bilateral relationship with Argentina – especially benefiting from a trade relationship – it is growing clear that the PRC’s sphere of influence has not only permeated Latin America but has started to fully envelop it. Expanding hegemonic influence into the Western Hemisphere in such a way is an important step in reasserting themselves and fulfilling their perceived destiny as *the* world’s power and is in line with their one-hundred-year strategy.⁶⁴

EVOLVING RELATIONS: THE FUTURE FOR THE UNITED STATES, ARGENTINA, AND THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

The [Department of Defense] will act urgently to sustain and strengthen deterrence, with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as our most consequential strategic competitor and the pacing challenge for the Department.

⁶³ Alastair Johnson, “How to Get Argentina Citizenship – The Full 2022 Guide,” *Where Can I Live*, Nov 10, 2020, <https://wherecani.live/blog/view/argentina-citizenship-and-passport/>.

⁶⁴ Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon - China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), 29-30.

-US Department of Defense, 2022 National Defense Strategy⁶⁵

The United States and Argentina have been politically involved since Argentina gained its independence from Spain in 1823. Since that time, the two states have had enduring diplomatic and commercial relations, generally with a positive outlook – interventionist attempts to reduce Perón’s position and the United States’ actions in the Falklands War being two examples of strained periods. However, there has never been a period – especially since the introduction of the Monroe Doctrine and the reinforcement of the Roosevelt Corollary – that such contentious extra-Hemispheric influence has existed and threatened to drive a wedge between US-Argentinian relations. With increased PRC influence it is hard to say how exactly this degradation may occur, whether it be increased tariffs or a lack of diplomacy, or some other unknown quantity.

However, cracks are starting to appear in these relations. Efforts to resolve the ongoing crisis in Venezuela offer a case study of these fracture points. The United States’ action with the Lima Group – an international group of Latin American states designed to reinstate democracy in Venezuela – as well as the public support of Venezuela’s interim president has strained tensions with Argentina in recent years. This incongruence is a symptom of the current political climate and, as such, Argentina has subsequently withdrawn its interests from the Lima Group as of March 2021, being the first to depart from the intergovernmental agency.⁶⁶ It is poignant to recognize that their withdrawal was swiftly followed by Mexico, Saint Lucia, and Bolivia, with

⁶⁵ “National Security Strategy,” 20.

⁶⁶ “Argentina leaves Lima Group, says bloc’s Venezuela policies have ‘led to nothing,’” *Reuters*, Mar 24, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-argentina-limagroup/argentina-leaves-lima-group-says-blocs-venezuela-policies-have-led-to-nothing-idUSKBN2BG2VA>.

Peru intending to depart the group but stopping due to a change in administration – further demonstrating Argentina’s effect politically on the region.

While the position between the United States and the PRC should not be seen as a zero-sum game – and the United States is well beyond such Cold War-era policies as Containment – it should be unsettling for American decision-makers to see the insidious division of values between the United States and Latin American powers such as Argentina. Such discordancy, while small when isolated, is worrisome when accumulated and should concern strategic planners within the United States. While currently not zero-sum, economists are beginning to forecast a trend of an “us versus them” dichotomy, in which future trade relationships will either be with the PRC or the United States, but likely not both – in any significant capacity.⁶⁷

American political culture operates on two- and four-year increments, as administrations change and new representatives are elected to office. However, the PRC plans longitudinally and has plotted out a century-long, enduring strategy to gain prominence. As such, the United States tends to be behind the power curve, as transitory politicians must spend time establishing their agendas and learning their position before enacting change or policy. The United States must embrace a longer-term planning process – similar to persisting efforts against the USSR that transcended Cold War presidencies or to the newly introduced “Long-Term Strategy of the United States” for emission reduction by 2050 – if it hopes to compete with the PRC in the coming years and overcome the limitations of the election cycle.⁶⁸

Latin America will decide who controls the Western Hemisphere and the United States and the PRC are competing over whose rule sets will govern that half of the world. Argentina is

⁶⁷ “What Will Argentina Gain From More Chinese Investment?”

⁶⁸ “The Long-Term Strategy of the United States: Pathways to Net-Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions by 2050,” *United States Department of State and the United States Executive Office of the President*, Nov 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/US-Long-Term-Strategy.pdf>.

an integral piece of that fight. While it is unclear what exactly will come from the PRC's insertion into the affairs of Latin America, something is abundantly clear. It is the onus of the United States to strategize for and prevent the loss of Latin America to the PRC, and something must be done quickly before it is no longer possible to recover that foothold. Argentina should be a crucial piece in that calculus.

It is very telling that the United States is behind in its approach to Latin America when examining the most recent NSS and realizing that there is not any section dedicated to strategically tackling the PRC's interests in Latin America and only one reference to the United States' intention to "protect [the Western Hemisphere] against external interference or coercion...from the PRC."⁶⁹ While this reference may seem enough, it would be beneficial for the NSS to dedicate attention specifically to the Hemisphere and provide some specialized guidance related to the region – as the lines of effort for countering the PRC elsewhere are likely different than those that would and should be employed in Latin America. The United States' strategy needs to match the paradigm shift that has occurred now that the withdrawal from the Middle East has occurred, and the transition is not happening fast enough. All other references to the Western Hemisphere were regarding humanitarian requirements or democratization. SOUTHCOM's March 2022 address to Congress stated that "The PRC continues to...expand...[DIME] influence in [Latin America] and challenges U.S. influence" and that "without continued modest investment...PRC influence...could soon resemble the...predatory influence [seen] in Africa."⁷⁰ Despite this impassioned call for action, the NSS was wanting for direction in relation to Latin America, demonstrating again that the United States is behind the

⁶⁹ "National Security Strategy," 41.

⁷⁰ Laura J. Richardson (GEN, USAF), "SOUTHCOM Posture Statement," *SOUTHCOM Portal*, Mar 8, 2022, https://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM%20Posture%20Final%2022.pdf?ver=tkjkieaC2RQMhk5L9cM_3Q%3d%3d.

power curve when addressing PRC action in the region. The SOUTHCOM vision is to “ensure the Western Hemisphere is secure, free, and prosperous,” but when guidance from the NSS is ambiguous or not present, it is difficult to see the strategic plan that the United States has in place in order to accomplish that vision.⁷¹

One course of action to limit Chinese influence over Argentina – and thereby Latin America – is to continue to maintain strong military education links with their officer and enlisted corps. The citizenry and the military still have a somewhat tenuous relationship in Argentina – residual wounds from decades of coups and juntas, and more recently, the Dirty War of the 1970s and 1980s – with a survey as recently as 2017 showing only fifty percent of the populace had trust in the military.⁷² While civic-military relations are still mending, the political-military complex is in a much stronger position, with heads of state since President Menem in 1991 seeking to rectify the negative feelings by granting pardons and reintegrating military leaders into the political process and discussion.⁷³ Regardless of efficacy and the sentiments of the people, senior leadership within Argentina is still influenced by military leaders, and thus, it is worthwhile for the United States to be involved in the professional education of future generations of these military members. The United States Air Force Academy has done this to some extent, hosting its annual International Week, where it invites professional military cadets from around the world for a week of camaraderie, international

⁷¹ “About Us,” *US Southern Command*, 2022, <https://www.southcom.mil/About/#:~:text=Our%20Mission, homeland%20and%20our%20national%20interests>.

⁷² Sebastián Vargas, “The Grim Legacy of Dictatorship,” *Development and Cooperation*, Oct 3, 2018, https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/end-military-dictatorship-argentinass-governments-have-found-it-difficult-deal-armed-forces?_sc_token=v2%253A-Xn6_D94s_Nl8dm1j6GUXDINL67ied5H-IsWrlcu4Zu6ows9XJSyazul3ids_AQuTULjRjK10WS6dcdGbpwjiywzOZYnUlteCc1-F0ZXllyJdqe8tdFPWjzDcplglcsYY3SQ_JBvnO1JzsiiS54sxm6YixVicND042suDd-wOPV8_oknz1jmk2mAe50_DYf.

⁷³ Vargas, “The Grim Legacy of Dictatorship.”

cooperation, and relationship building – with Argentinian cadets participating frequently.⁷⁴ However, the PRC is taking identical measures, inviting Argentinian cadets to their International Cadets Week – which they have done for the last eight years – at the PLA University of Science and Technology.⁷⁵ Furthermore, in November of 2021, the PRC’s Ministry of National Defense stated publicly that it intends to conduct more joint exercises with Argentina and that they intend to “expand cooperation in high-level exchanges [and] personnel training...to push the relationship between the two militaries to a new level.”⁷⁶ The United States should be attempting to bridge this military relationship rather than the PRC and must take steps to expand military cooperation and professional education opportunities to Argentina if it hopes to usurp the favorable position that the PRC has fostered.

The Academy should also further expand these links with Argentina through its international cadet program – where a foreign cadet attends the Academy from basic training to graduation and receives formal military education within the United States. Between the classes of 2013 and 2022, there have been one hundred and thirty international cadet graduates, eleven of which have been from Latin American states – a mere eight percent – and none of which have been from Argentina.⁷⁷ Not only should the Academy correct this by inviting Argentina to participate in the program – taking cadets from the *Escuela de Aviación Militar* – but arguably they should increase the number of cadets participating from states within the Latin American

⁷⁴ Ray Bowden, “Strengthening Alliances: AF Academy Host Partner Nation Cadets During International Week,” *United States Air Force Academy*, Oct 29, 2019, <https://www.usafa.edu/strengthening-alliances-af-academy-hosts-partner-nation-cadets-during-international-week/>.

⁷⁵ “5th International Cadets Week unveiled at PLA University of Science and Technology,” *China Military Online*, Nov 4, 2013, <http://en.people.cn/90786/8445306.html>.

⁷⁶ Huang Panyue, ed., “Regular Press Conference of the Ministry of National Defense on October 28,” *Ministry of National Defense*, Nov 4, 2021, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/focus/2021-11/04/content_4898323.htm.

⁷⁷ “Class of 2013 - Key Data,” *Association of Graduates: United States Air Force Academy*, 2022, <https://www2.usafa.org/ClassData/Index/2013>.

region as a way to engender military cooperation and understanding. By linking the training to the United States, influence and practices will be preserved and a co-dependence will also be instilled.⁷⁸ Additionally, the United States should continue to foster military materiel trade agreements – such as the sale of twenty-four Beechcraft T-6 Texan II training aircraft in 2018 – and look to broker novel arrangements with Argentina to further solidify the connection with the foreign state.⁷⁹ If the United States does not provide materiel sales such as these, it is highly likely that the PRC will instead.

As this paper addressed, there are various concerns related to the growing Sino-Argentinian relationship that the United States should consider. With this in mind, there are numerous actions that the United States should take to either divorce Argentina from the PRC or strengthen the US-Argentinian relationship. The PRC's capital is one of the strongest holds that it has available over Argentina, so offering less restrictive loans – and lobbying the IMF to do the same – could help prevent further Argentine indebtedness to the PRC. As previously discussed, it behooves the United States to integrate with the Argentinian military, conducting more joint exercises, offering professional military education, and generating defense pacts, while also continuing to have Argentina purchase military materiel to build a defense reliance between the two states. The PRC is a master at propagandizing and as such, the United States must seek to dispel misinformation as well as to provide its own information campaigns underscoring the negative drawbacks of alliances with the PRC – whether military, political, or economic. Finally, the United States should work with Great Britain to re-examine the issue of

⁷⁸ Okata, "To Counter China in Latin America, Focus on Argentina."

⁷⁹ Benjamin Gedan and Kathy Lui, "As It Reengages with the World, Will Argentina Rebuild Its Military to Resume Its Historic Global Role?" *Wilson Center - International Relations*, May 14, 2018, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/it-reengages-the-world-will-argentina-rebuild-its-military-to-resume-its-historic-global>.

Falklands/Malvinas sovereignty – especially as this point has historically damaged the relationship between the United States and Argentina – and mediate a solution between the UK and Argentina. Being the agent to broker an amenable solution would go a long way to generate goodwill towards the United States in Argentina.

While the PRC is the threat that the United States should be preparing and strategizing for, it is necessary to look at what damage can be wrought by Chinese influence in the Western Hemisphere and not just the Indo-Pacific. This is a glaring hole in the perception of the United States' threat salience that must be addressed sooner rather than later. Just because the PRC is geographically separated from Latin America does not mean that it cannot make use of and become a key player in that region. While the situation is less than desirable for the United States' position in Latin America, it is not beyond irreparable. However, it will require dedicated strategic planning, early intervention, and prevention instead of reactionary decision-making. The longer the United States waits to act, the less likely a proactive solution will be viable.

There cannot be two suns in the sky, nor two emperors on the earth.
-Confucius⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon*, 17.

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