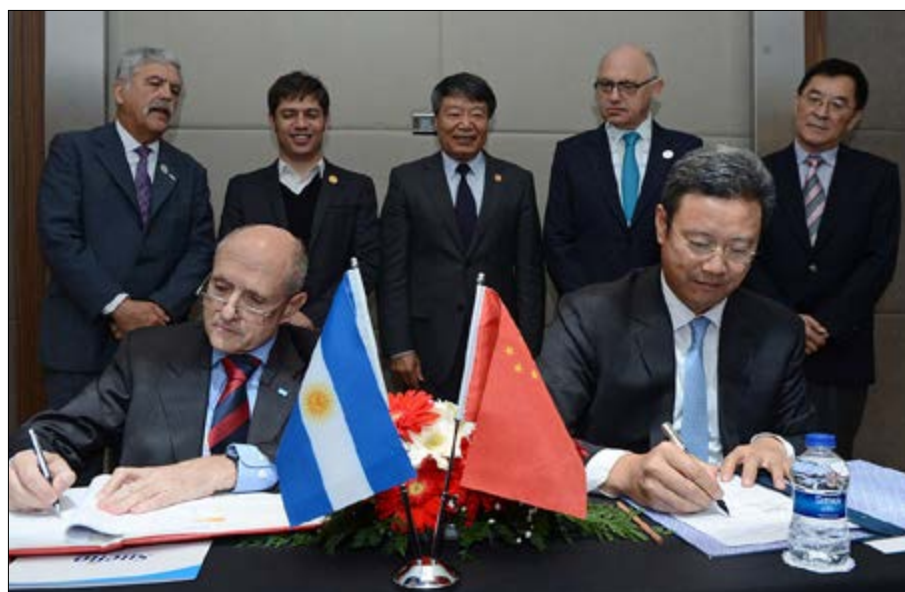


China Grows Its Political and Military Influence in Argentina

By Ryan Berg
OE Watch Commentary

China has expanded its influence, quietly and persistently, in a number of important domains in Argentina. According to reporting in *Tierra Pura*, a relatively new media site described as center-right politically, recent conversations between Argentina's Defense Minister and the Chinese Ambassador broached the possibility of military equipment sales and manufacturing agreements, military exchanges, and the potential establishment of a Chinese military base in Patagonia. These discussions follow the controversial transfer of a space station with potential military applications in Neuquén (in the Patagonian desert) to the Chinese.

The possibility of greater Chinese maritime activity near Argentina's shores generated immediate domestic backlash, notes *La Nueva*, a local Argentinian newspaper. Several civil society and environmental organizations petitioned Argentina's Supreme Court to curtail Chinese fishing vessels in its territorial waters, which have often numbered in the several hundred at any given time. If China establishes airports, ports, and bases in Tierra del Fuego (Patagonia), as recent



Argentina and China have signed important agreements in a number of areas recently, ranging from construction to finance to military agreements.

Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Argentina_y_China_firman_contratos_para_construcci%C3%B3n_de_cuarta_y_quinta_central_nuclear_01.jpg, Attribution: Wikimedia Commons

conversations indicate it may, the People's Liberation Army could control the strategic chokepoint of the Strait of Magellan, which is large enough to permit the transit of aircraft carriers between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

“The Argentine official and the Chinese diplomat addressed...the evaluation of possible military exchanges and peacekeeping missions, the development of the dock infrastructure and logistics services for the Ushuaia naval base, and the expansion of the Río Tercero Chemical Pole of Military Manufacturing.”

Source: “Influencia de China en Argentina: reunión con el Ministro de Defensa, base militar y capacitaciones (Chinese influence in Argentina: meeting with the Minister of Defense, military base and training),” *Tierra Pura* (a relatively new media site described as center-right politically), 4 March 2021. <https://tierrapura.org/2021/03/04/influencia-de-china-en-argentina-reunion-con-el-ministro-de-defensa-base-militar-y-capitaciones/> <https://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2021/03/29/reforma-ministerial-as-trocas-de-bolsonaro-no-primeiro-escalao-do-governo-nesta-segunda.ghtml>

At that meeting, the Argentine official and the Chinese diplomat addressed various aspects related to the coronavirus pandemic and spoke about collaboration in cyber defense and Argentina's interest in the purchase of JF-17 fighter jets and armored military vehicles... They also addressed the evaluation of possible military exchanges and peacekeeping missions, the development of the dock infrastructure and logistics services for the Ushuaia naval base, and the expansion of the Río Tercero Chemical Pole of Military Manufacturing.

Source: “Presentaron un amparo contra la pesca ilegal y depredadora en el sur (They filed an injunction against illegal and predatory fishing in the south),” *La Nueva* (an Argentina local newspaper based in the provincial city of Bahía Blanca), 10 April 2021. <https://www.lanueva.com/nota/2021-4-10-6-30-59-presentaron-un-amparo-contra-la-pesca-ilegal-y-depredadora-en-el-sur>

Several experts in marine resources, together with the Civil Association Observatory of the Right to the City, presented a “collective environmental protection” petition to the Supreme Court of the Nation to “stop illegal and predatory fishing” in the Argentine Exclusive Economic Zone and its adjacent areas...The lawsuit seeks to force the government to carry out actions to stop the serious environmental damage generated by the systematic activity of illegal and predatory fishing carried out for years by industrial fleets.