



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

# NATO has no reason to rush to include Argentina in its orbit



Argentina's **request** for NATO global partner status is the latest in a series of efforts by unconventional President Javier Milei to demonstrate his determination to implement his pro-Western and pro-American policies.

Significant changes, particularly in foreign policy, have marked the past 4 months since Milei assumed the presidency.

The request, which Defence Minister Luis Petri submitted at NATO headquarters in Brussels last week, confirmed that Argentina will continue its shift towards a distinctly pro-US course.

Milei **withdrew** Argentina's application for BRICS membership in the first days of his presidency, at the end of December.

This happened at the last moment, given that the application submitted by the previous administration was supposed to take effect on January 1.

The founders of BRICS, and particularly China as its informal leader, were affected by the move of the new President of Argentina. As a large and influential South American country, Argentina would have been a significant new member of the anti-Western bloc, but the new president spoiled the celebrations.

## Strategic link with Western allies

While the withdrawal from almost certain BRICS membership appeared to be an emergency effort to overturn Peronist President Alberto Fernandez's previous policy, the request for a NATO global partner has been a carefully tailored foreign policy move by President Milei's administration.

Argentina has not applied for full NATO membership; there are no conditions for such a thing because the Treaty of the Alliance determines the geographical extent of the alliance to Europe, the US, Canada, Turkey, and the islands in the North Atlantic (Article 6).

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However, eventually granting Argentina the status of a global partner would be a significant step towards a strategic partnership with NATO. Only Colombia has this arrangement with NATO in South America, and there are 8 other countries worldwide.

As NATO's global partner, Argentina would have access to information exchange, military training, participation in joint exercises, and standardisation of security procedures and protocols, among other things.

The status it seeks would give Buenos Aires an undeniable strategic link with Western allies, which in political terms seems to be the principal goal of the Argentina's president.

## US favourable to Argentina's policy

Milei's commitment to the Alliance was further demonstrated by the fact that, immediately before applying at NATO headquarters, his Minister of Defence concluded an agreement with Denmark on the purchase of 24 F-16 aircraft.

The US, which last week granted Argentina \$40 million in foreign military financing (the first such case in the last 20 years), supported the deal.

The money will allow Argentina to buy American weapons, including equipping the F-16s it will acquire from Denmark.

NATO welcomed Argentina's application. "Argentina plays an important role in Latin America. Closer political and practical cooperation could benefit us both", said Mircea Geoană, NATO Deputy Secretary General.

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However, the Alliance has more pressing matters, and it does not seem realistic that it will be in a hurry to consider and accept Argentina's request.

NATO's focus is on Ukraine and strengthening its eastern flank, given the open Russian threat. Also, its plans have been directed towards partners in the Indo-Pacific in a joint response to the security tensions produced by China.

## Reputational risk for NATO

In an attempt to tie itself more firmly to NATO, Argentina has a burdensome issue with the UK, one of the founding members and the most influential member of the Alliance, regarding the Falkland Islands.

Javier Milei made significant changes in Argentina's foreign policy in just a few months, but he, like his predecessors, considers the Falklands part of Argentina.

He repeated this during the **meeting** with UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron last January, when they announced that "they would agree to disagree and do so politely".

NATO members are not immune to territorial disputes (for example, Greece and Turkey). However, the Alliance does not need another territorial issue, particularly if the interested party is one of its most influential members.



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President Milei will not change his attitude towards the Falklands, because any retreat on that issue would mean a significant loss of internal support, which no politician in Argentina wants to allow, let alone a right-wing populist like the current president.

The nature of his governance is the primary reason why NATO countries are wary of Argentina's aspirations to become a global partner.

Argentina's internal political instability and the potential for significant foreign policy shifts, such as the one by the pro-Western Milei, could result in a government unfavourable to Western integration during the next redistribution.

The arrival of a leader with opposite positions to those of Javier Milei would put NATO in an uneasy position if one of its global partners withdraws from the alliance overnight.

The reputational risk for NATO remains significant, despite the new president's apparent preference for strengthening ties with the US and Western partners.

Admission to global partner status requires the consensus of all 32 NATO members, and it is a process that could take a long time. In the case of Argentina, the process has been burdened with political issues, which makes its outcome uncertain in the short term, regardless of the many benefits that the Alliance would have by including one of the largest and most

influential South American countries in its orbit.