# Taking over the inside — China's growing reach into local waters

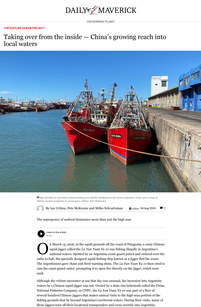

Photo: Ni Haifeng / Xinhua via Getty Images. Aerial photo taken on 12 August 2021 shows the Port of Ningbo-Zhoushan, the world's busiest port in terms of cargo throughput, in Ningbo, Zhejiang Province, China.

By Ted Cohen, Pete Richards and Phillip Dwamena | Wed, 29 Sep 2021 | 6 min read

The superpower of unlawful dominion more than just the high seas

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In March 2021, in only the second plenary of the court of Pengzhou, a rusty Chinese bulk cargo collier by the Tan Lee Yu was fishing illegally in Argentina's territorial waters. Spotted by an Argentine coast guard patrol and ordered over the loudspeaker to stop and be boarded, the crew of the Tan Lee Yu ignored the Argentinian gun-shot and fled leaving them. The Tan Lee Yu was then run the coast guard sister, prompting it to open fire directly on the Jaguar, which was hit.

Although the violent encounter at sea that day was unusual, the incursion into Argentine waters was not. Between 2016 and 2021, the Chinese-flagged vessels belonging to the Dalian Ocean Fishing Company, or COFC, the Tan Lee Yu's owner, spent part of at least several hundred Chinese days that makes annual visits to the high seas portion of the Argentine EEZ, the Southwest Atlantic Ocean and the Falkland Islands. Chinese fishing fleets are typically of left functional importance, operating in distant water fishing waters, where they are not permitted. Since 2019, the Argentine navy has chased at least a dozen vessels out of Argentine waters for suspected illegal fishing, according to the government.

Photo: Ministerio de Defensa / Armada Argentina via Wikimedia Commons. Argentine Navy patrol boat Piedrabuena, which fired on the Chinese-flagged Tan Lee Yu in March 2021 after it was caught illegally fishing in Argentine waters.

A year after the illegal incursion and sinking of the Tan Lee Yuan Yu, an Argentine's Federal Fishing Council issued a fishing permit amendment. It was granting fishing licenses to long-range trawls that would allow them to operate within Argentine waters, but with a caveat: the Chinese-flagged vessels would be required to carry a "fishery facilitator" onboard, at their own expense.

This decision was notoriously because it caused to violate Argentine regulations that can only forbid foreign crewed ships from fishing. Argentina's flag is falling in waters but also prohibit the granting of fishing licenses to ship operators with records of illegal fishing. Nevertheless, the Tan Lee Yu's owner, Dalian Ocean Fishing, was granted a "fishery facilitator" onboard, and the Chinese vessels returned to fishing.

The move by local authorities may have been a contradiction, but it is an increasingly common tactic employed by Chinese fishing companies. Since 2017, Chinese fishing interests in Africa by the Pacific have been caught fishing in any size restricted national fishing grounds, primarily using a process known as "flagging in." This technical loophole allows a vessel to be registered in a country other than that of its owner, and, in some instances, allowing foreign nationals to operate vessels in local waters.

Chinese companies were notorious at least in industrial squid fishing vessels that fly the Argentine flag, which commonly operate in the country's outer-squid fleet. Many of these companies have been tied to a variety of crimes, including damaging fish at sea, towing in other countries' waters, and illegally transferring fish to other ships. The practice of squid is sought by foreign vessels to land the catch in Argentine ports, but it is also expected to countries including the United States, Canada, Italy, and Spain.

China uses operations about goods by flagging vessels to evade the waters of countries including Micronesia, Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Morocco, and Iran.

The city of the Falkland Islands and Argentina's Patagonia has the center of its illegal fisheries, concentration in certain foreign waters or the amount of overfishing that occurs in the Falkland Islands, Argentina, and Chile. Since 2020, the Falkland Islands authorities have made numerous most countries expulsions to crewed fishing boats profiles the country and made it easier to enforce fishing regulations. Flagging in underwater fishing vessels, which are not required to have a fishery facilitator, is a tactic that has become increasingly commonly used by mainline crews. And under the international financial concerns, local security is also underlined by the export of this exact source of illegal fishing, according to a report by the Chinese investigative of Fortune Global, closely focused on environmental crimes.

These hundreds of industrial fishing ships also complicate China's ocean conservation goals. In 2017, after pressure from environmental groups and conservation, fishing interests tried to crack down on the use of in distant water fish at joint vessels. But that ban, which was to be implemented in 2020, was delayed until 2021 and 2022 in Chile and Peru and flags other countries.

Over the past three decades, China has gained supremacy over global fishing by a combination of state subsidies, government support, and illegal fishing. The country is the fourth-largest fishing fleet and the world's largest industrial fleet. When it comes to targeting other countries' waters, Chinese fishing ships typically not "on the outside," putting in the work of illegally fishing in other countries' waters, and then returning to domestic waters. In recent years, China has increasingly taken a "hybrid" approach, getting control from the inside by putting in flag in their ships so they can fish in domestic waters, and then, when necessary, flagging in foreign vessels to fish in the high seas. This tactic, the Jaguar is then likely to result in political clashes, but, pose no similar risks.

China has not hidden how this approach leaves into large ambitions. In an academic paper published in 2019, Chinese fishery officials explained how they have relied extensively on Chinese companies, for example, to promote Argentina's territorial waters through flagging and transfer methods, "and the impact of a global policy.

The trend is especially pronounced in Africa, where Chinese companies operate flagged in fishing vessels in the waters of Ghana, Senegal, Mauritania, Morocco, Kenya, and notably, Ghana, where at least 70 Chinese fishing ships flying the Ghanaian flag are fishing in national waters, even though foreign investment in fishing is technically illegal. Chinese fishing companies have also been implicated in illegal fishing in Senegal, Mauritania, according to a report sponsored by the international environmental law advocacy group.

China has also displayed fishing vessels from the European Union, right on its doorstep, in the waters of Morocco. In the recent past, dozens of vessels, most of them from Spain, have been caught fishing illegally in Morocco's waters, and have been expelled by Moroccan coastguards. The operators, based in Morocco, in 2019 and this year, experience at least an flagged in vessels in Morocco's waters.

The Chinese government has also been implicated in illegal fishing in Pacific Ocean. Chinese ships crewed the waters of Fiji, the Solomon Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, having flagged in or signed access agreements with those countries, according to a report from Greenpeace and the Environmental Justice Foundation. In the U.S. Chinese fishers are known to operate in Guam illegally. The organization, "and the growth in their fishing fleets, is a direct result of the Chinese government's policy," the report said.

Photo: Ministerio de Defensa / Armada Argentina via Wikimedia Commons. Argentine Navy patrol boat Piedrabuena, which fired on the Chinese-flagged Tan Lee Yu in March 2021 after it was caught illegally fishing in Argentine waters.

THE NEW MARAUDING SUPERPOWER: CHINA'S CHINESE FISHING FLEET OFTEN ACTS WRONG

The global footprint of unlawful has doubled since the nineteen-sixties, the operative fish has adapted what can be sustainably caught. Now, more than a third of the world's stocks have been overfished. To feed the demand, the proliferation of foreign industrial fishing, mostly by Chinese companies, has spread to the waters of Africa, Latin America, and south-east Asia, jeopardizing food security and compromising food security by exporting an essential source of protein. Western consumers, particularly in Europe, the U.S. and Canada, are beneficiaries of this dynamic, as Chinese companies export the bulk of the catch.

In the past six years, more than an illegal flagged in a dozen different countries but controlled by Chinese companies, according to a report by Greenpeace. Chinese companies are also implicated in illegal fishing in Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, Chile, Mauritania, Senegal, Ghana, and southern Africa.

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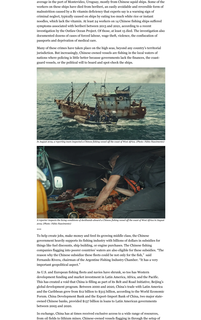

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Chinese political influence shows up on board this fishing vessels as well, by the lying of the Chinese Communist Party's influence in Argentina's fishing industry. A report by the called the 2018 of the continental Crew Lin Jun, formed by the Chinese, the ship of Argentina's fisheries and Jaguar in Argentina waters. Its crew was a mix of Argentinian and Chinese nationals, and the Jaguar's crew, the report said, "maintained close ties" to Chinese officials in Argentina's government and consulate. Company officials said no and by being Argentina's fisheries and the ship directly.

Chinese fishers, the report said, "have the protection government began to shift. Because Malvinas, Argentina's foreign ministry, said reports that the charges had "provoked a lot of noise" and that Argentina's fishing industry "is not responsible." Argentina's foreign ministry maintained that Argentina's fishing industry had and international law. "We hope to not impact bilateral relations," the brief reputation. Several weeks later, the Argentine Navy fired on the Tan Lee Yu, the report said, "the Chinese crew members were flown back to China on a chartered flight."

By May, Argentina's foreign minister was on a phone to Beijing to meet with the Chinese ambassador. "Long Yan," the minister said, according to a report from the Chinese state-owned "voyage of social cooperation" and promised another voyage of Chinese investment in Argentina. He. It added: "China will continue its support to the efforts made by Argentina to strengthening its national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

And in South America, the increasingly foreign presence in territorial waters is stoking nationalist worry in places like Peru and Argentina. “China is becoming the only player, by displacing local companies or purchasing them,” said Alfonso Miranda Eyzaguirre, a former Peruvian minister of production. Pablo Isasa, a captain of an Argentinian hake trawler, added: “We have the enemy inside and out.”**DM**

*This story was produced by The Outlaw Ocean Project with reporting contributed by Maya Martin, Jake Conley, Joe Galvin, Susan Ryan, Austin Brush and Teresa Tomassoni.*



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