

IMPLICATIONS OF CHINESE FISHING PRACTICES IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

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Executive Summary

1. The Chinese fishing industry has experienced rapid growth after the late 70s. Policy efforts have been directed to shore up fishery production, which has been threatened by severe depletion due to overfishing and environmental degradation.
2. The Chinese government has fine-tuned its marine production structure, shifting its focus to aqua-culture industry and offshore fishing after the opening up policy in the 80s. However, policy outcomes remain uneven.
3. Results are impressive in some, like production restructuring and growth control, but remain patchy at best in others like diversifying existing fishing workforce and implementing fishing moratorium.
4. China is engaged in active fishing activities in the South China Sea. The Chinese impact is more reflected in its overwhelming fishing capacity, which significantly burdens the marine environment in the region.
5. In the South China Sea, unsettled territorial disputes have catalyzed unilateralism in environmental protection and resource management of countries in dispute. Besides excessive fishing activities, Chinese fishing vessels also practice destructive methods which could seriously harm the marine habitat and quickly drain fishery resources.
6. In February 2013, China's State Council issued a set of guidelines to boost the country's marine fishing industry. The guidelines target long-range fishing, intensive sea-farming and aquatic products processing. The Chinese government has yet to make public relevant fishery data, such as subsidies.

7. Current development shows that China may enter into talks with ASEAN to enact a Code of Conduct soon. It remains to be seen whether the two can converge opinions in due course; no immediate outcomes should be expected however.