

Taiwan's Marine Environmental Policy in the South China Sea

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The South China Sea includes the Pratas Islands, the Spratly Islands, the Paracel Islands, the Macclesfield Bank and the Scarborough Shoal. It is a part of the Pacific Ocean, encompassing an area of around 3,500,000 km² from Singapore to the Strait of Taiwan. It is also one of the largest sea bodies after the five oceans. The sea consists of hundreds of islands, atolls, cays, shoals, reefs, and sandbars, most of which have no indigenous people, many of which are naturally under water during high tide, and some of which are permanently submerged. Minerals, natural gas, and oil deposits can be found on the islands and their nearby seafloor. The sea and its mostly uninhabited islands are subject to competing claims of sovereignty by several countries. States and territories that border each other on the sea include the People's Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam. For economic, military, and transportation reasons, the control--especially of the Spratlys--has been under dispute among Taiwan, China and several Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam from the mid-20th century onward.

Accompanying with the expanding scale and intensity of human activities and marine resources exploitation, the loss of environmental quality and biodiversity in the South China Sea has been increasing. For instance, oil discharged from vessels is often found in many parts of the Sea. Overfishing and/or destructive fishing are also problems in the region. Furthermore, many development activities such as the establishment of artificial structures (e.g., jetties, seawalls, ports, airport runways, military facilities) on the sensitive islands or reefs may significantly disturb the natural processes of coastal and marine environment. These issues have been the focus of numerous literatures as well as the themes of many regional forums. On the other hand, it is believed that numerous shipwrecks can be found in the Sea. The South China Sea is, therefore, recognized as one of the potentially richest underwater cultural heritage sites. In short, the South China Sea is an extremely important asset for the peoples in the region in terms of environment, ecology as well as cultural heritage.

For the past several decades, Taiwan has effectively been in control of the Pratas Islands (i.e., reef atoll and the Pratas Island) and the biggest island (i.e., Taiping Island or Itu-Aba Island) of the Spratly Islands. In response to the environmental degradation in the South China Sea, the government of Taiwan published two editions of its marine policies in 2001 and 2006. President Ma Ying-jeou further announced his marine policy in 2008 during his presidential campaign. In addition to the claim of its long-recognized territory, Taiwan pays much attention to the environmental protection and ecological conservation of the South China Sea. Therefore, this presentation will introduce and discuss the related strategies included in the

above marine policies. Examples in the Ocean Policy White Paper of 2006 are: (1) to establish the marine biodiversity protection network in the South China Sea, (2) to establish an international center for marine research on the Pratas Island, (3) to protect the coral reef system, (4) to control aviation and maritime transportation in the Pratas Islands, (5) to conduct natural and underwater archeological surveys, and (6) to promote the necessary conservation and restoration projects in the South China Sea. Base on the concept of “common heritage”, the marine policy of President Ma also proposes to open Taiwan’s Taiping Island for the establishment of an “international peace park” so that the surrounding countries can work hand-in-hand to protect the natural environment and marine biodiversity in the South China Sea. The Island can also serve as an important base for human rescue efforts when emergency incidents occur. Additionally, oil pollution prevention and control deserves policy priority to avoid a repeat of the recent oil-spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, in light of the intensive development of oil and gas exploration activities in the South China Sea. However, more consensuses should be reached in the region. More dialogues on the appropriate mechanisms and future cooperation with other countries are also essential.

台灣對於南海的海洋環境政策

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摘要

南海包括東沙群島、南沙群島、西沙羣島、中沙群島與黃岩島。它是太平洋的一部份，涵蓋了從新加坡到台灣海峽，約 3,500,000 平方公里的面積。南海也是除了五大洋以外的最大海域之一。這部份海域包括數百座島嶼、環礁、沙洲、淺灘、礁脈與沙壩，這些地區大多數都沒有原住民，在漲潮時也都會自然覆蓋在水面下，有些則是永久沉沒在水下。這些島嶼和鄰近海床都有礦物、天然氣與石油的沉積床。南海與其大部分的無人島都面臨許多國家的主權爭議。在黃海互相交界的國家與地區，包括中國、中華民國(台灣)、菲律賓、馬來西亞、汶萊、印尼、新加坡與越南。基於經濟、軍事，與交通方面的因素，在台灣、中國以及如越南等的東南亞國家之間，從 20 世紀中葉起就一直存在著統治權的爭執，尤其是對南沙群島的主權爭議。

隨著人類活動與海洋資源開發規模與程度的擴張，南海環境品質與生物多樣性的程度不斷降低。舉例來說，南海許多海域經常可以發現輸油管石油滲漏的現象。過度捕撈與/或破壞性捕魚作業也是這個地區的問題。另外，在這些脆弱的島嶼或礁脈建造人工建築結構體(例如防波堤、海堤、港口、機場跑道、軍事設施)等的開發措施，也都嚴重干擾沿海與海洋環境的自然過程。這些議題都是無數文獻與眾多區域性論壇關注的焦點。另一方面，南海也可能存在為數眾多的沉船殘骸，因此被認為是水下文化遺產最豐富的地區之一。總之，在環境生態以及文化遺產方面，南海都是這個地區人民一項非常重要的資產。

過去數十年以來，台灣都一直有效控制著東沙群島(即環礁與東沙島)，以及南沙群島的最大島(即太平島或稱黃山馬礁)。為了回應南海環境劣化的問題，台灣政府分別在 2001 年與 2006 年頒布了兩個版本的海洋政策。馬英九總統更在 2008 年競選總統期間進一步宣示了他的海洋政策。台灣除了長期認定領土的主張之外，對於南海的環境保護與生態保育更付出極大關切。因此，這份報告要說明並探討上述海洋政策的一些相關策略。2006 年海洋政策白皮書中有一些實例，包括：(1)在南海建構海洋生物多樣性的保護網路、(2)在東沙島設置一座國際性的海洋研究中心、(3)保護珊瑚礁系、(4)控制東沙群島的空中與海上交通運輸、(5)進行自然與水下考古調查、(6)在南海推行必要的保育以及復育計畫。基於「共同遺產」的概念，馬總統的海洋政策也主張開放台灣的太平島來建立一座「國際和平公園」，使南海週邊的國家能攜手合作，共同保護南海的自然環境與海洋生物多樣性。太平島也可以在發生緊急意外事件時作為救援行動的基地。另外，基於南海石油與天然氣探勘作業的密集開發現況，石油污染的防止與控制應該列為政策的優先項目，以防止重演最近的墨西哥灣漏油災難類似事件。然而，這個區域應該要能達成更多共識。關於適切的機制與將來的合作方面，也必須與其它國家展開更多的對話。