

U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission

Staff Research Report



July 27, 2015

Taiwan’s Global Fisheries Modestly Advance its “International Space”

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Acknowledgments: Richard Bush, Bonnie Glaser, James Kraska, Scott Moore, and Kimberly Wilson provided helpful insights and reviewed drafts of this paper, but do not necessarily agree with or endorse the assessments and statements contained herein. Special thanks to Caitlin Campbell. Errors and views are the authors’ own.

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Introduction

Despite being home to one of the largest fishing industries in the world, Taiwan cannot participate fully in international fisheries management and conservation efforts due to its ambiguous political status and restricted “international space.”* Although these political realities have limited its participation in global fisheries management, the size, geographic range, and technical capabilities of its fishing industry have given Taiwan the political leverage to take modest and pragmatic steps to expand its participation in bilateral, regional, and international fisheries-related agreements.

Background

Taiwan’s official diplomatic relations are few and its participation in international organizations limited as a result of the “One China” principle.†¹ Concerned about the perception of elevating Taiwan’s international status, China is reluctant to cede “international space” to Taiwan and generally objects to Taiwan’s expanded participation in international organizations. China displaced Taiwan at the UN in 1971 and its growing international clout since then has further constrained Taiwan’s ability to participate in the UN and its specialized agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Maritime Organization, and the International Labor Organization—all agencies that address fisheries-related issues.²

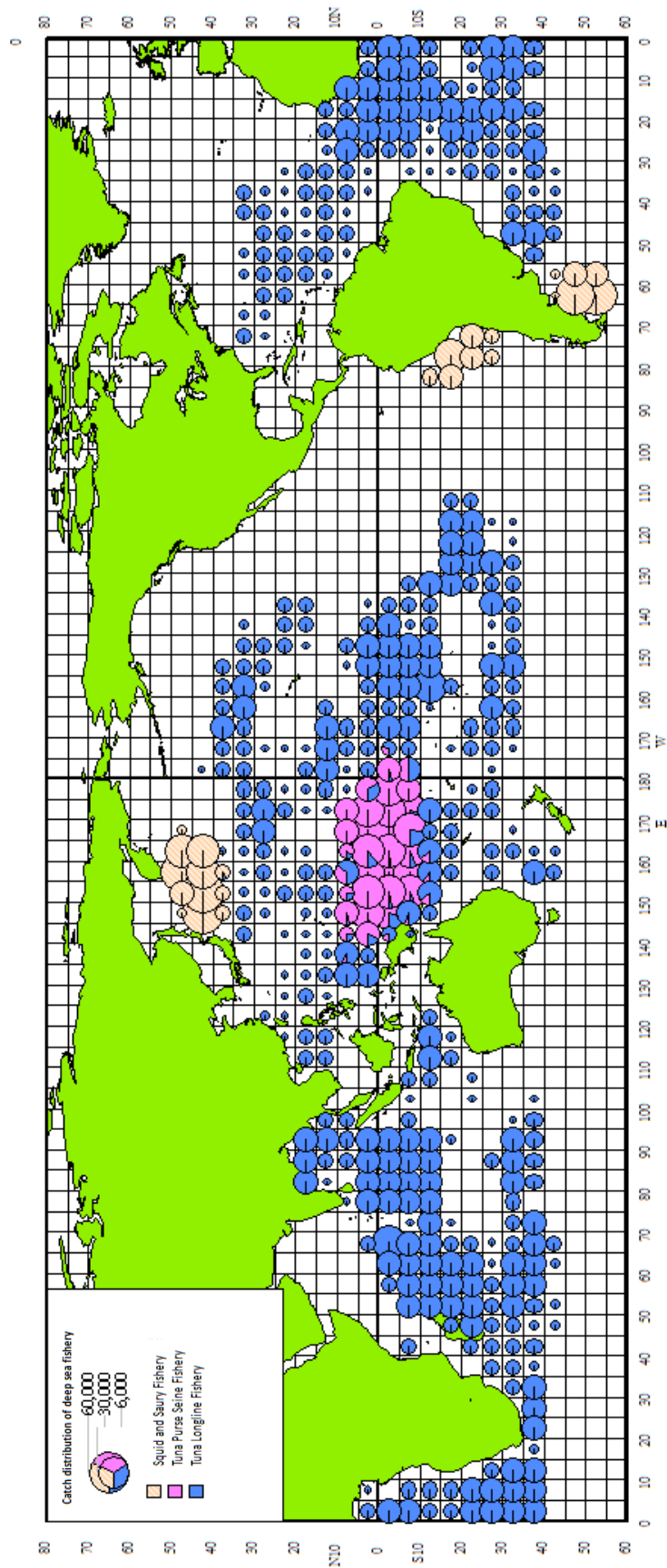
Taiwan began developing its fishing industry in the 1950s, and by the 1960s turned to distant water fishing to compensate for overfished coastal waters. This shift led Taiwan to be a global player in high seas fisheries, particularly tuna and squid. According to 2013 statistics from Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan fishing vessels bring in 1.2 million metric tons of catch annually worth \$3.37 billion (105.9 billion New Taiwan Dollars); 44.8 percent of this value comes from high seas fishing in the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic oceans (see Figure 1).³ As Taiwan began to access fisheries farther from its shores, Taiwan authorities sought to regulate its industry to mitigate overcapacity of fishing vessels and prevent overexploitation.⁴ However, because fisheries pose a classic “tragedy of the commons”‡ problem, their long-term sustainability requires not only domestic regulation and enforcement, but also multiparty agreements to govern international fishing practices. Without the inclusion of Taiwan in international or regional schemes to manage fisheries, such multiparty agreements would have limited effect—which is a principal reason why Taiwan advocates its participation in those agreements.⁵

* According to Bonnie Glaser, senior adviser for Asia at the Washington, DC think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies, “The concept of international space is broadly construed as participation in international institutions and affairs, be they diplomatic, nongovernmental, or economic in nature.” By pursuing international space, countries can shape international policy debates and gain greater international and domestic legitimacy. Bonnie S. Glaser, “Taiwan’s Quest for Greater Participation in the International Community,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, November 2013, 1.

† Under China’s “One China” principle, China insists that no country may have diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan (whose formal name is the Republic of China) at the same time. It opposes any international organization treating Taiwan as a sovereign state for purposes of membership.

‡ “Tragedy of the commons,” first coined in a 1968 paper by biologist Garret Hardin, refers to the idea that natural resources open to all—from fish in the high seas to a public grazing field—are subject to overexploitation. No one individual bears the cost of such exploitation, and all may benefit. The “tragedy” occurs when too many individuals seek to benefit from the limited natural resources, leading to overexploitation.

Figure 1. Catch Distribution of Taiwan's Deep Sea Fisheries



Source: Taiwan Overseas Fisheries Development Council

Taiwan's Bilateral Fisheries Agreements and Diplomacy

According to Walter Lohman, director of the Asian Studies Center at the Heritage Foundation, “Fisheries issues are the trigger for many of the maritime flare-ups in the region. . . . Taiwan is as susceptible as any other country to become embroiled in the resulting conflict. It should be involved in managing the resources.”⁶ To do so, he suggests regional powers not only incorporate Taiwan in diplomatic mechanisms involving fisheries, but also “recognize the practical need for greater bilateral ‘diplomatic’ interaction” with Taiwan.⁷

Taiwan has forged bilateral fisheries agreements with other regional fishing powers, despite its unique political status. This modest expansion of Taiwan’s international space is all the more significant given the political sensitivity of the disputed waters in which many of Taiwan’s fishing vessels operate. The unsettled legal status of the waters of the Taiwan Strait has resulted in a lack of coordinated and sustainable management of the fisheries in that region. Additionally, Taiwan’s overlapping claims in the East and South China seas with Japan and the Philippines respectively have led to occasional clashes at sea among fishing and maritime law enforcement vessels from those countries over disputed fishing grounds. Since Taiwan’s political status hinders its ability to settle disputed maritime boundaries with neighboring states, Taiwan has sought pragmatic solutions with each of these three parties—China, Japan, and the Philippines—to support its fishing interests and negotiate the geography of its fishing grounds.

China

Because China views Taiwan as part of its sovereign territory, China seeks positive outcomes for Taiwan’s fishing industry as it would its own. At the same time, China discourages any action it perceives may elevate Taiwan’s political status—such as entering into an agreement on a state-to-state basis or becoming a member of a regional fisheries management organization (RFMO, discussed in more detail in a later section) as a sovereign state. Although it does not tend to oppose Taiwan’s pursuit of international business and trade agreements, China is vocal about its disapproval of any of Taiwan’s agreements that could be interpreted as an assertion of sovereignty.⁸

The Taiwan and Chinese fishing industries have complementary strengths. Taiwan developed its fishing industry earlier than China did, giving Taiwan the advantage in management experience, fishing technologies and equipment, and inroads in the global market. China, however, has several advantages over Taiwan in developing its fish industry: China has greater political clout in international fishing fora, and China’s relatively lower labor costs give it an advantage in crewing fishing vessels. China has also drawn upon its favorable geography to develop a flourishing aquaculture industry.⁹

In recent years, Taiwan and China have reached some formal understandings on fisheries related issues tied to law enforcement matters.¹⁰ In 2009, the two parties signed cooperative agreements in two areas. One agreement addresses “fishing crew affairs,” providing for the management of accidents and labor disputes aboard mainland Chinese-crewed Taiwan fishing vessels. The other agreement addresses cross-Strait maritime crime (such as smuggling fisheries products and stowaways aboard fishing vessels) and mutual judicial assistance (such as cooperation on obtaining evidence and other aspects of the criminal justice process).¹¹

However, fisheries conservation remains an area of dispute. Taiwan maintains that China’s nondemocratic political system enables it to more easily impose and enforce a fishing moratorium while Taiwan, as a democracy that affords greater political participation to its citizens (including fishermen) would struggle to compel its fishermen to comply with a moratorium.¹² Overall, a continued lack of comprehensive management of the disputed East China Sea and Taiwan Strait fisheries between Taiwan and China means the area is in danger of becoming overfished—an unfavorable trend that could increase tension between the two sides.¹³

Japan

The landmark Taiwan-Japan fisheries agreement of April 2013, concluded after 17 years of negotiations, is a strong example of how Taiwan’s pragmatic approach to its fisheries policy can bolster its international status and calm tensions related to maritime disputes. The agreement provides for the joint fisheries management of disputed waters, essentially allowing Taiwan fishing vessels access to 4,530 square kilometers (1,750 square miles) of previously

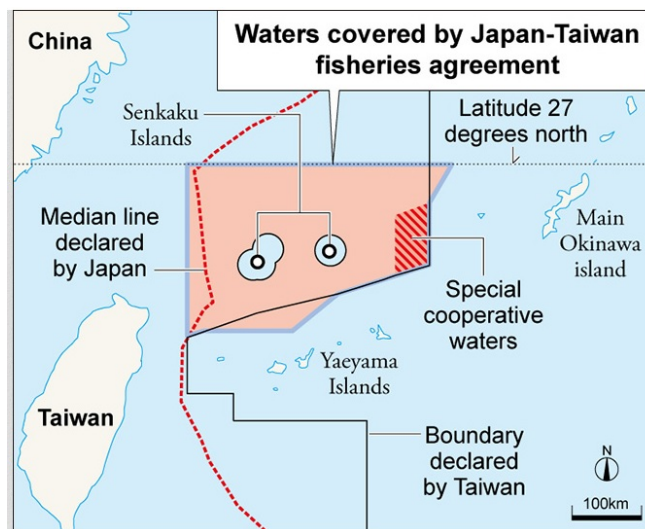
contested fishing grounds (see Figure 2). It hinges upon the mutual understanding that fisheries can be jointly managed without conceding on sovereignty claims.¹⁴

China responded coolly to the agreement, but the international community greeted it positively, lauding it as a constructive model to peacefully and jointly manage resources in disputed waters.¹⁵

- A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated: “We are extremely concerned about Japan and Taiwan discussing and signing a fishing agreement. ... We hope that Japan earnestly abides by its promises on the Taiwan issue and act[s] cautiously and appropriately.”¹⁶ China’s muted disapproval of the Taiwan-Japan agreement reflected its dilemma of supporting Taiwan’s fishing interests while preventing the erosion of its own sovereignty claims, including Taiwan and the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.
- U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry praised the agreement in a 2014 speech, stating: “Japan and Taiwan ... showed last year it’s possible to promote regional stability despite conflicting claims.”¹⁷

In the two years since the signing of the initial agreement, Taiwan and Japan have demonstrated their overall satisfaction with the arrangement, despite some domestic disgruntlement from their respective sides. Both Taiwan and Japan have institutionalized the agreement through domestic regulations, indicating both sides view the bilateral agreement as binding. The two sides have also held regular meetings since the signing of the agreement to amend rules regarding the proper distance between vessels and method of setting fishing lines.¹⁸

Figure 2. Taiwan-Japan Fishing Areas Under 2013 Agreement



Note: In the pink shaded area, fishing vessels are governed by their nation’s own laws and regulations, and fishing boats can operate free of interference from the other side. The red striped zone, marked “Special cooperative waters” on the map, is an area where disputes frequently arise. Since Japan and Taiwan reached the agreement in 2013, they have subsequently developed rules as to how to divide these waters fairly for the operations of fishing boats from both sides.

Source: Satoshi Ukai, “Japan, Taiwan Agree on Fishing Rules in Waters Around Senkakus,” *Asahi Shimbun*, January 25, 2014. <http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/china/AJ201401250058>; Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The Taiwan-Japan Fisheries Agreement—Embodying the Ideals and Spirit of the East China Sea Peace Initiative*. [http://www.mofa.gov.tw/Upload/WebArchive/979/The%20Taiwan-Japan%20Fisheries%20Agreement%20\(illustrated%20pamphlet\).PDF](http://www.mofa.gov.tw/Upload/WebArchive/979/The%20Taiwan-Japan%20Fisheries%20Agreement%20(illustrated%20pamphlet).PDF).

Philippines

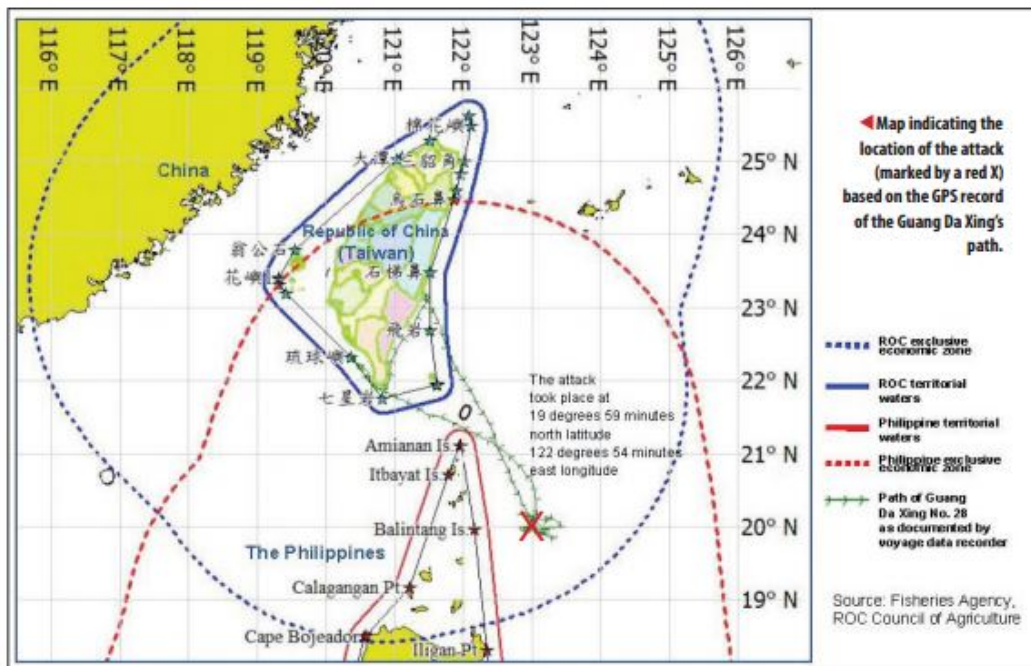
Taiwan has also leveraged its fishing industry to advance its political interests in its relationship with the Philippines. As in the Taiwan-Japan relationship, overlapping claims to fishing grounds occasionally cause tension between Taiwan and the Philippines. In 2013, the relationship was seriously tested when Philippine Coast Guard personnel seeking to halt the operations of a Taiwan fishing vessel in disputed waters opened fire, leading to the death of a Taiwan fisherman.¹⁹ Figure 3 illustrates the contested waters between the Philippines and Taiwan. In the wake of the incident, Taiwan demanded a bilateral fisheries agreement to prevent future clashes. Over two years later, the

two sides continue to negotiate final details of the agreement. According to a December 2014 *Manila Times* report, the Taiwan representative to the Philippines said the pending agreement included three elements: (1) avoidance of the use of force by maritime law enforcement, (2) use of government-to-government channels of communication in the event of a fishing incident, and (3) speedy release of detained fishing boats and personnel.²⁰ Press reporting indicates the agreement will be unlike the Taiwan-Japan agreement because it will focus on law enforcement procedures for handling incidents at sea involving fishing, not the delimitation of fishing grounds between the two parties.²¹

Any Taiwan-Philippines fishing agreement is unlikely to immediately quell enduring resentment between fishermen on both sides. The Philippines' cautious approach to finalizing the agreement may stem from concerns about potential negative implications for Philippine fishermen, the majority of whom use less sophisticated fishing technology than their Taiwan counterparts, and fish for subsistence rather than for commercial industry.^{22, *}

Nevertheless, a bilateral fisheries agreement with the Philippines would be another boost to Taiwan's international political stature, particularly as maritime disputes in the region continue to generate political tension. Like Japan, the Philippines officially recognizes the government in Beijing rather than Taipei. While China has demonstrated it is unwilling to compromise on its claims in the East and South China seas, another fishing agreement in which Taiwan sets aside the issue of maritime claims in favor of pragmatic fisheries cooperation could earn it international credibility and goodwill where it lacks official diplomatic relations.[†]

Figure 3. Overlapping Exclusive Economic Zone Claims of Taiwan and the Philippines and Location of 2013 Fishing Incident between Taiwan and the Philippines



* Similarly, some view the Taiwan-Japan agreement as a foreign policy victory for Taiwan, bolstering Taiwan's East China Sea maritime claims at the expense of Japan's Okinawan fishing industry, which operates in the same fishing grounds as Taiwan's industry. Jens Kastner, "Taiwan: The Winner in the China-Japan Row?" *Al Jazeera*, February 3, 2014. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/02/taiwan-winner-china-japan-row-20142294639293399.html>; Joel Atkinson, "With Japan Fishing Deal, Taiwan Scores a Win in East China Sea Disputes," *World Politics Review*, May 7, 2013. <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12927/with-japan-fishing-deal-taiwan-scores-a-win-in-east-china-sea-disputes>.

† For example, then-U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel and then-Australian Defense Minister David Johnston cited the pending fisheries agreement as a positive example of international cooperation on maritime disputes in East Asia. Chuck Hagel, "The United States' Contribution to Regional Stability" (Shangri-la Dialogue, Singapore, May 31, 2014). <https://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri-la-dialogue/archive/2014-c20c/plenary-1-d1ba/chuck-hagel-a9cb>; David Johnston, "Managing Strategic Tensions: Q&A" (Shangri-la Dialogue, Singapore, June 1, 2014). <http://www.iiss.org/en/events/shangri-la-dialogue/archive/2014-c20c/plenary-3-bce0/qa-3d38>.

Source: Kuo-Tsai John Chao and Wen-lung Laurence Lin, “Rough Seas: Historical Precedents in International Maritime Law and the Implications for the Guang Da Xing incident,” *Strategic Vision for Taiwan Security* (September 2013): 20. <http://www.mcsstw.org/web/SV/sv2013-SI01.pdf>.

Taiwan’s Participation in Regional Fishery Management Organizations

The 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) arose out of a specification in the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to create regional organizations addressing the conservation and management of fish stocks, particularly highly migratory fish stocks and those straddling multiple state jurisdictions.²³ The UNFSA set in motion the establishment of new RFMOs and motivated existing RFMOs to strengthen their mandates. These organizations aim to overcome the “tragedy of the commons” problem of high seas fisheries by agreeing to conservation measures applicable to all members.²⁴

Although Taiwan is not a party to the UNFSA, it nevertheless has reaped significant benefits from the agreement through its subsequent inclusion in RFMOs. Figure 4 illustrates Taiwan’s RFMO participation.

Figure 4. Taiwan’s RFMO Participation

Organizations	Year Established*	Year Taiwan Joined	Taiwan’s Status
Northern Pacific Fisheries Commission (NPFC)	2015	2015	Full member
South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organization (SPRFMO)	2009	2012	Full member
Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC)	1949, updated in 2010	2010	Full member
Northern Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission (NPAFC)	1993	2005	Observer
Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC)	2004	2004	Full member
Extended Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)	1994	2002	Full member
The International Scientific Committee for Tuna and Tuna-like Species in the North Pacific Ocean (ISC)	1995	2002	Full member
International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT)	1969	1972	Cooperating Non-Contracting Party, Entity, or Fishing Entity

Source: Adapted from Bonnie S. Glaser, *Taiwan’s Quest for Greater Participation in the International Community* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 2013), 44-46, with information from RFMOs and Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Taiwan’s “Fishing Entity” Identity in the UN

The UNFSA crystallized the concept of “fishing entities” for the first time in a binding UN instrument. The text of the agreement never explicitly mentions Taiwan; however, the term “fishing entities” is generally understood to include

* Date convention establishing RFMO entered into force.

Taiwan.²⁵ Although the international community does not treat Taiwan as a sovereign state for purposes of membership in international governmental organizations that require statehood for membership, Taiwan's status as a "fishing entity" in the UN enables it to circumvent challenges related to its political status while participating in RFMOs.

Taiwan's interests in economic and natural resource development by participating in RFMOs appear to have trumped domestic fears about the appearance of diminished political status associated with a "fishing entity" status.²⁶ Additionally, the term "fishing entity" echoes the type of participation Taiwan enjoys in other international organizations, such as "economic entity" in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and a "separate customs territory" in the World Trade Organization.*

Taiwan's "fishing entity" nomenclature appears to have had little or no adverse impact on its status in the international community. To the contrary, Taiwan's inclusion in international organizations, albeit under a special nomenclature, seems to strengthen its standing in the international community.²⁷ Nevertheless, some have argued that Taiwan's continued participation under a special status—often in conjunction with a designation indicating a subordinate status to China, such as "Chinese Taipei"—distinguishes it from true sovereign states and in fact weakens its international stature.²⁸

After the adoption of the UNFSA, Taiwan became affiliated with several RFMOs over the span of a decade, in stark contrast to its participation in only one over the preceding three decades. Notable trends regarding Taiwan's growing participation in RFMOs include:

- *Taiwan's first full RFMO membership in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) in 2002 marked a turning point for Taiwan in terms of its historically limited participation in RFMOs. Taiwan went on to join four additional RFMOs over the following decade.* Taiwan's membership in the WCPFC—over China's objections—has been an overall success. Despite Taiwan's designation as "Chinese Taipei," the WCPFC Convention afforded Taiwan rights and duties similar to those of states with Contracting Party status. As a non-Contracting Party Member, Taiwan has a slightly abbreviated range of rights: it is ineligible to serve in the chairmanship or vice chairmanship, to determine the Commission headquarters, or to appoint the executive director. Otherwise, it participates fully in the WCPFC's chief business of managing and sustaining highly migratory fish stocks in the Pacific Ocean. Because the WCPFC was the first effort to implement the UNFSA at a regional level, Taiwan's membership set the tone and served as a model for its subsequent inclusion in RFMOs.²⁹
- *Taiwan's official diplomatic relations facilitated its RFMO memberships.* Taiwan has official diplomatic relations with 22 states,[†] many of which are maritime states for whom fishing is important.³⁰ In negotiating the WCPFC, for example, the Pacific island states of the Marshall Islands, Kiribati, and the Solomon Islands—all of whom officially recognize Taiwan and are WCPFC members—advocated for Taiwan's participation in the organization. Additionally, Taiwan's Latin American diplomatic partners supported Taiwan's participation in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), which is responsible for tuna stocks in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Seven of the IATTC's 21 members maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan when the IATTC sought to update the Convention to accommodate Taiwan's

* Applying this logic, Taiwan initially proposed it participate in the World Health Assembly (WHA), the governing body of the UN World Health Organization, as a "public health entity." Taiwan ultimately participated in the WHA as an "observer" as a result of China's sensitivity to the affiliation of the WHA as a UN organization. In addition to Taiwan, six other entities, such as the Holy See and the International Committee of the Red Cross, have WHA observer status. Vincent Wei-chang Wang, "A Modus Vivendi for Taiwan's 'International Space'?" (American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA, October 14-16, 2011). <http://aacs.cuny.cuny.edu/2011conference/Papers2011.htm>; World Health Organization, "Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly: List of Delegates and Other Participants," May 23, 2014; http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA67/A67_DIV1-Rev1-en.pdf.

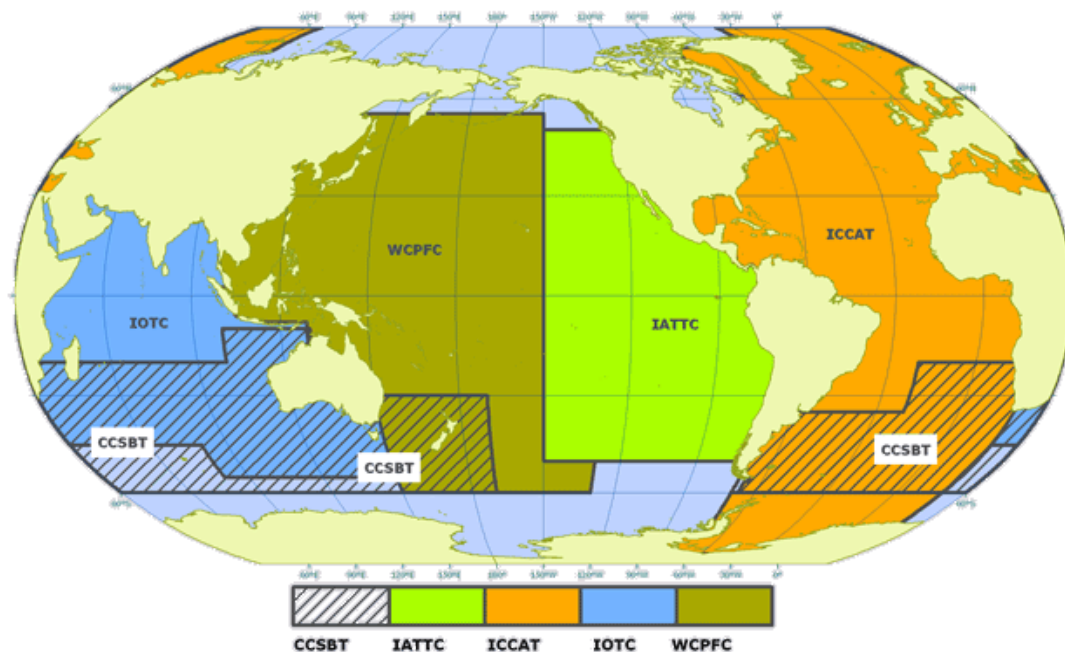
† Taiwan maintains diplomatic relations with: Belize, Burkina Faso, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Holy See, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Swaziland, and Tuvalu.

membership in 2003.* When the updated Convention came into force in 2010, Taiwan gained membership in the IATTC.³¹

- *Lack of UN membership has not prevented Taiwan’s meaningful participation in some RFMOs.* Recognizing the inclusion of Taiwan as necessary to the achievement of fish stock sustainability goals, RFMOs have sought to involve Taiwan in their decision-making and scientific bodies in a variety of creative ways that skirt the issue of Taiwan’s political status. The key exception is the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC). Because the IOTC was established under the Constitution of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, membership and observership is limited to Food and Agriculture Organization members, a status Taiwan lacks.³² However, in 2001 the Food and Agriculture Organization began to include Taiwan by welcoming “invited experts” from Taiwan to participate in their personal capacities.³³

Even as a full member of many RFMOs, Taiwan receives only an abbreviated range of rights, such as those in the WCPFC described above. Nevertheless, there is an international expectation Taiwan will comply with UNFSA, to which it is not a party. As a result, some find Taiwan’s political rights in RFMOs less than satisfactory, arguing that Taiwan is required to fully abide by treaties and agreements as a non-signatory without enjoying the benefits provided to full treaty signatories.³⁴

Figure 5. Jurisdiction of Tuna RFMOs



Source: UN Food and Agriculture Organization

Enduring Challenges

Regulatory gaps arising from or exacerbated by its limited international space will continue to challenge Taiwan’s fisheries and fishing industry. Key challenges include: (1) illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, (2) labor conditions aboard long-haul fishing vessels, and (3) piracy threats to fishing vessels. Though Taiwan has taken domestic measures to address these challenges, the global nature of these challenges requires a global solution, in which Taiwan cannot play a formal part.

* Costa Rica switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in 2007.

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing

IUU fishing, the exploitation of regulatory gaps or weaknesses in the international fisheries management system to illegally harvest fisheries, undermines the conservation efforts of RFMOs. Critics argue Taiwan could do more at the domestic level to address its industry's use of "flags of convenience" to evade scrutiny in fishing activities. Flags of convenience can be an indicator of IUU fishing.^{35,*} However, Taiwan cannot easily participate in directly shaping the intergovernmental effort against IUU fishing because the lead agency managing the effort is the Food and Agriculture Organization, to which Taiwan is not a party.

A 2013 U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration report documents instances of IUU fishing activities by Taiwan-owned vessels in waters covered under the WCPFC, but also notes Taiwan "took appropriate corrective actions to address the ... described IUU fishing activities."³⁶ As a result, the report does not go so far as to identify Taiwan as a fishing entity undertaking IUU fishing.³⁷ Separately, recognizing the impediments IUU fishing poses to conservation and management efforts, Taiwan in 2013 developed its National Plan of Action to Prevent, Deter, and Eliminate IUU Fishing.³⁸

Labor

Labor issues have long troubled the global fishing industry, and Taiwan is no exception. Migrant fishermen are a particularly vulnerable population.³⁹ According to the U.S. State Department, up to 160,000 migrant workers are working on Taiwan's long-haul fishing vessels, with some reporting non- or under-payment of wages, long working hours, physical abuse, lack of food, and poor living conditions.⁴⁰ The industry also faces allegations of labor trafficking, which can occur when a recruitment agency hires a foreign fishing worker and withholds the worker's passport or deducts heavy service fees from the worker's pay under the terms of an employer- or recruitment agency-written contract. Despite these allegations, prosecutions are rare.⁴¹ Although Taiwan has enacted domestic laws to protect migrant fishermen and bilateral agreements with several of the key source countries for migrant fishermen, Taiwan authorities have stated they face challenges in investigating and enforcing the industry's adherence to those laws due to the mobile and global nature of the industry.⁴²

Because it is not a member of the UN specialized agencies addressing safety and labor issues in the fishing industry (Food and Agriculture Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Labor Organization), Taiwan lacks the ability to directly participate in international standards-setting for the industry. For example, Taiwan shares interests related to the International Labor Organization's 2007 Work in Fishing Convention. Without Taiwan's participation, however, the Convention lacks valuable input from an entity with a key fishing industry with significant labor needs and challenges.⁴³

Piracy

The worldwide reach of Taiwan's fishing industry makes its vessels vulnerable to maritime piracy. However, Taiwan's political status limits its ability to defend itself against piracy, particularly in waters far from home such as the Gulf of Aden. Given the size and limited capabilities of Taiwan's navy, as well as its likely inability to secure logistical port calls due to lack of diplomatic recognition by countries in the region, enduring piracy patrols by Taiwan's navy—such as those the Chinese navy has undertaken since 2009—are not feasible.⁴⁴ With the exception

* Hundreds of vessels globally are registered to flag states that are "convenient" and advantageous to individual fishing companies for a variety of reasons, including lower fees, taxes, or labor standards. Flagging fishing vessels with nationalities not party to international fishing agreements also allows fishing vessels to skirt international and domestic regulations, such as the ability to fish above an RFMO-assigned quota. "Lowering the Flag: Ending the Use of Flags of Convenience by Pirate Fishing Vessels," *Environmental Justice Foundation*, 2009. <http://ejfoundation.org/sites/default/files/public/Lowering%20the%20flag.pdf>; and Kuan-Hsiung Wang, "In Combating and Deterring IUU Fishing: Do RFMOs Work?" in Tafsir Malick Ndiaye and Rudiger Wolfrum, *Law of the Sea, Environmental Law, and Settlement of Disputes: Liber Amicorum Judge Thomas A. Mensah*, Brill Academic Publishers, 2007, 434-440; Matthew Gianni and Walt Simpson, "The Changing Nature of High Seas Fishing: How Flags of Convenience Provide Cover for Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing," *Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry, International Transport Workers' Federation, and WWF International*, October 2005. <http://www.wwf.org.uk/filelibrary/pdf/flagsofconvenience.pdf>.

of cooperative efforts with the EU, Taiwan is unable to join most major antipiracy exercises and organizations, leaving it to rely on outside parties for assistance in piracy-related crises.⁴⁵

In 2010, Somali pirates seized a Taiwan fishing vessel off the coast of Madagascar and held hostage the 26-member crew, which included Chinese and Vietnamese nationals in addition to a Taiwan captain. After a year and a half of ransom talks, a Chinese naval vessel assisted the crew with their release. Taiwan's press statement following the crew's release illustrates its reliance on others to address piracy: "We appreciate the assistance of the European Union, international anti-piracy organizations, China, and other relevant countries."⁴⁶ In a 2011 incident, the 28-member crew of a Taiwan fishing vessel managed to overwhelm six Somali pirates who hijacked their vessel, and later sought assistance from a UK-led antipiracy task force in the region.⁴⁷

Outlook and Conclusion

Taiwan's sizable high seas fishing industry makes it a key player in the management of global fisheries. As a result, integrating Taiwan more deeply into international fisheries management both expands Taiwan's international space and contributes significantly to the success of global fisheries conservation. Taiwan has benefitted from its "fishing entity" status without upsetting cross-Strait ties, and the international community has benefitted from incorporating Taiwan into the political instruments for high seas fisheries management.

Despite international political challenges with regard to its fisheries, the domestic political environment appears to be favorable for Taiwan's continued activism in this area. Although Taiwan's two primary political parties, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), differ somewhat in their views on Taiwan's maritime disputes, the opposition DPP has welcomed recent progress on bilateral fishing agreements by the current KMT administration. The DPP's tradition of support for fishermen rights suggests Taiwan would continue to pursue pragmatic arrangements to ensure sustained catch for its fishing industry in the event of a switch in ruling parties following the 2016 presidential election.⁴⁸

Endnotes

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