

# An analysis of China's investment in the hydropower sector in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region

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## Abstract

The Mekong River's natural resources offer large benefits to its populations, but it also attracts the interest of foreign investors. Recently, Chinese firms, banks and government bodies have increasingly invested in large hydropower projects in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. Due to China's rapid economic growth, its rapid industrialisation and its limited domestic natural resources, the Chinese government has issued the 'Going Out Strategy' which promotes investments in overseas natural resources like water and energy resources. In search for climate-friendly low-carbon energy, cheap electricity and access to a growing market, Chinese institutions turn to Southeast Asia where Chinese institutions are currently involved in more than 50 on-going large hydropower projects as contractors, investors, regulators and financiers. These Chinese institutions have influence on environmental and social practices as well as on diplomatic and trade relations in the host countries. Currently, there are major gaps in understanding who is engaged, why, how and with what impacts. This paper therefore aims to assess the motives, actors, beneficiaries and the direct and indirect impacts of China's investment in large hydropower projects in the Greater Mekong Sub-Region. The authors use the 'Rising Powers Framework' to assess these issues, which is an adapted version of the Asian Drivers Framework.

## Keywords

China Mekong Hydropower Natural resources Investments Dams  
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## Notes

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