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14. ABSTRACT A joint, interagency, and multilateral counter Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated-Fishing (IUU-F) campaign in the South China Sea (SCS) can support the socioeconomic security of Vietnam and challenge China's offensive gray zone strategies in Southeast Asia. First, the U.S. and Vietnam can capitalize on the opportunity to lead multilateral collaboration efforts to counter illicit transnational IUU-F. Such cooperation can deepen regional economic and security cooperation, transcend territorial disputes, and challenge the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) perverse security threats in the SCS. Next, the genesis of a U.S.-Vietnam-led SCS Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE) coalition modeled after Joint Interagency Task Force - South (JIATF-South) to conduct end-to-end counter-illicit IUU-F operations. This task force would be the action arm to realize and enforce collective counter-IUU-F efforts. Last, the development of an IUU-F communication and social media inform and influence strategy that reinforces a favorable U.S.-Vietnam strategic narrative and denounces CCP illegal activities. A series of information operations can mobilize civil society and provide the Government of Vietnam (GVN) with political and domestic leverage to protest or renegotiate the CCP's geopolitical aims in the SCS. Hence, gaining comparative advantages in the competition continuum requires a multilateral, whole-of-government approach that layers and synchronizes all instruments of national power in the form of integrated campaigning.		
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“Seas” the Day: How the U.S. and Vietnam Can Challenge China’s Proliferation of Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fishing (IUU-F) in the South China Sea

UNDERSTANDING THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: “THERE ARE NO OTHER FISH IN THE SEA”

Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (IUU-F)¹ is a leading global environmental, socioeconomic, and security threat in today’s maritime domain.² The fishing industry in Asia supplies over 50% of the world’s seafood.³ In particular, the SCS, which is Asia’s third-largest marine ecosystem,⁴ contains one of the world’s most biodiverse marine life, supports over 12% of the world’s seafood that is worth an average of 56 billion USD annually and employs the livelihood of over 3.7 million fishermen.⁵ Over the past few decades, the increase in fish consumption and feedstock aquaculture⁶ have encouraged widespread overfishing and destructive fishing practices, rapidly declining sustainable global fish stocks.⁷ According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), sustainable and available fish stocks

¹ Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing (IUU fishing) have varying definitions. This paper uses the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG’s) definitions outlined in the Coast Guard Commandant’s latest Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Strategic Outlook. “IUU fishing is a collection of dishonest fishing practices on the high seas and in areas within national jurisdiction. IUU fishing includes fishing that is: 1) Illegal – in contravention of existing laws and regulations; Unreported – Not reported or misreported; and Unregulated- Executed by vessels without nationality and conducted in areas where the flag state is not a party to international agreements or in areas where fishery management measures do no exits.” United States Coast Guard, *Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Strategic Outlook*, (Washington D.C.: United States Coast Guard, September 2020), 5, https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/Images/iuu/IUU_Strategic_Outlook_2020_Final.pdf

² United States Coast Guard, *Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Strategic Outlook*, 2-4.

³ Rashid Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim: The Future of Fisheries in the East and South China Seas*, (Hong Kong: ADM Capital Foundation, November 3, 2021), 6, <https://www.admcf.org/research-reports/sink-or-swim/>.

⁴ There are thirteen Large Marine Ecosystems (LMES) in Asia. #1 is the Arabian Sea with over 3.84 million km², #2 is the Bay of Bengal with over 3.59 million km², and #3 is the South China Sea with over 3.10 million km². Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 7.

⁵ Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 7-9.

⁶ Aquaculture is the "Farming of aquatic organisms, including fish, mollusks, crustaceans, and aquatic plants. There are two main types of aquacultures: marine (mariculture) and freshwater." Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 3-4.

⁷ Bruce Vaughn et al., *China’s Role in the Exploitation of Global Fisheries: Issues for Congress*, CRS Report No. R47065 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, April 12, 2022), 4, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47065>; Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 3-4.

have “decreased from 90% in 1974 to 65.8% in 2017.”⁸ Furthermore, IUU-F practices in the SCS have exacerbated the domestic food security of countries in Southeast Asia; overexploitation of fish stocks, unsafe and environmentally damaging fishing practices, loss of billions of dollars in annual revenue, illegal and illicit maritime transnational crime,⁹ and violations of the United Nations Conventional Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) recognized sovereign Economic Exclusive Zones (EEZs) have direct ties to IUU-F. Unfortunately, the SCS contains some of the world’s most prolific violators of IUU-F.¹⁰ However, in 2019 and 2021, The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime exposed China as the world’s worst IUU-F offender.¹¹ Furthermore, China has subsidized an uncontested civilian fishing fleet to serve as the world’s most significant paramilitary maritime intimidation force that uses its fishing fleet to conduct “gray zone”¹² operations, enforce illegitimate sovereignty claims and subjugate weaker nation-states. Hence de facto subsidizing IUU-F and blatantly disregarding UNCLOS laws, norms, and standards with aggressive shows of force further destabilized the SCS's already complex and volatile geopolitical situation.¹³

⁸ Vaughn et al., *China’s Role in the Exploitation of Global Fisheries*, 4; Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 3–4.

⁹ Although this paper will focus solely on IUU-F, due to the long “at-sea” periods, lack of port control measures, and sufficient maritime law enforcement, it is essential to note that IUU-F is closely associated with and has direct ties to transnational crime such as human trafficking, piracy, forced labor, illicit drug activity, etc. Hence future consideration should include IUU-F with other international criminal activities and its effect on regional instability. Vaughn et al., *China’s Role in the Exploitation of Global Fisheries*, 2; United States Coast Guard, *Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Strategic Outlook*, 12.

¹⁰ USINDOPACOM culprits include Taiwan, the Republic of South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Singapore, and China. Graeme Macfadyen and Gilles Hosch, *The Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Index 2021*, (Portmore, United Kingdom, and Geneva, Switzerland: Poseidon Aquatic Resource Management Limited and the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, December 2021), 5, <https://iuufishingindex.net/downloads/IUU-Report-2021.pdf>.

¹¹ Macfadyen and Hosch, *The Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Index 2021*, 31.

¹² “Gray Zone” activities are defined as “...coercive Chinese government geopolitical, economic, military, and cyber information activities beyond regular diplomatic and economic activities and below the use of kinetic military force.” Bonny Lin et al., *Competition in the Gray Zone: Countering China’s Coercion Against U.S. Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific*, RRA594-1 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2022), 2, www.rand.org/t/RR594-1.

¹³ Michael Heazle, *Countering China’s Grey Zone Incursions Through Better Management and Policing of Illegal Fishing in the South China Sea*, (Queensland, Australia: Griffith Asia Institute, Griffith University, 2021), 1-3, 6, https://www.griffith.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0031/1447645/China-grey-zone.pdf.

IUU-F is also a regional problem for many seafaring nation-states of Southeast Asia that rely heavily on the fishing industry to support the lifeblood of their country.¹⁴ Although the SCS supplies only 12% of the world's seafood, over half of its fishing vessels operate throughout its waterways, causing congestion and overfishing in already depleted and damaged fishing zones.¹⁵ In addition, fluid and open fish migration patterns, ocean and sea currents, and climate change affect where large fish populations reside, and often, dense fishing areas cross several EEZs. Furthermore, competing territorial claims and unclear EEZ boundaries in the SCS open gaps that confuse the roles and responsibilities of nation-states to counter IUU-F. Due to competing territorial claims, no SCS Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) can manage cross-EEZ or multilateral fisheries governance, thus forcing every country to develop its counter-IUU-F policies.¹⁶ The SCS lacks any synchronization of regional intelligence and information and intergovernmental coordination, exacerbating miscommunication that further strains multilateral relations.¹⁷ As a result, Asia falls victim to the exploitation of IUU-F by all opportunists willing to take advantage of the vulnerable maritime security situation for corrupt monetary gains. It is no wonder that China, with the world's largest fishing fleet,¹⁸ invites itself to fill the power vacuum and take advantage of a region ripe for control and coercion as few Southeast Asian nation-states are willing to stand up to the "bully of Asia." Perhaps there is one

¹⁴ Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 2–12.

¹⁵ Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 6.

¹⁶ Zhang Hongzhou, "Managing Fisheries in the South China Seas Waters," *East Asia Forum*, July 5, 2018, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/07/05/managing-fisheries-in-the-south-china-seas-troubled-waters/>; Vaughn et al., *China's Role in the Exploitation of Global Fisheries*, 24-25.

¹⁷ RFMOs are usually formed to support the governance of a country's EEZ. However, due to competing territorial claims, there is no central official fisheries governance organization. Hongzhou, "Managing Fisheries in the South China Seas Waters; Vaughn et al., *China's Role in the Exploitation of Global Fisheries*, 24-25.

¹⁸ China has the world's largest subsidized fishing fleet, including the world's largest Distance Water Fleet (DWF). Vaughn et al., *China's Role in the Exploitation of Global Fisheries*, 11-15.

that may be willing to help lead the way to counter CCP aggression and IUU-F in the South China Sea—Vietnam.

A joint, interagency, and multilateral counter Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated-Fishing (IUU-F) campaign in the South China Sea (SCS) can support the socioeconomic security of Vietnam and challenge China's offensive gray zone strategies in Southeast Asia.

First, the U.S. and Vietnam can capitalize on the opportunity to lead multilateral collaboration efforts to counter illicit transnational IUU-F. Such cooperation can deepen regional economic and security cooperation, transcend territorial disputes, and challenge the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP's) perverse security threats in the SCS. Next, the United States can propose the genesis of a U.S.-Vietnam-led SCS Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE) coalition modeled after Joint Interagency Task Force – South (JIATF-South) to conduct end-to-end counter-illicit IUU-F operations. This task force would be the action arm to realize and enforce collective counter-IUU-F efforts. Last, an IUU-F communications and social media inform and influence strategy would reinforce a favorable U.S.–Vietnam strategic narrative and denounces the CCP's illegal activities. A series of information operations can mobilize civil society and provide the Government of Vietnam (GVN) with political and domestic leverage to protest or renegotiate the CCP's geopolitical aims in the SCS. Gaining comparative advantages in the competition continuum requires a multilateral, whole-of-government approach that layers and synchronizes all instruments of national power in the form of integrated campaigning—*Creating the campaign, demonstrating the campaign, and “informatizing”¹⁹ the campaign.*

CREATING THE CAMPAIGN: U.S. AND VIETNAM – LEADING THE FIGHT TONIGHT AGAINST IUU-F

¹⁹ This is a play on words as China references "Informatized Warfare" as a critical pillar in integrating information operations into their warfighting doctrine. "Informatizing" refers to incorporating information operations into the campaign plan. Klon Kitchen, "Informatized Wars: How China Thinks About Cyber," *The Dispatch*, April 21, 2022, <https://thedispatch.com/newsletter/current/informatized-wars-how-china-thinks/>.

SCS countries like Vietnam,²⁰ have limited capabilities, resources, and governing mechanisms to enforce counter-IUU-F, which subjects the area to weak maritime security, corruption, and lax regulations.²¹ In 2021, Vietnam improved its ability to counter IUU-F but still needs more resources to do so thoroughly. Vietnam's rapid modernization and growth of its global fishing fleet have allowed it to become one of the world's largest seafood exporters—Vietnam has become the world's 4th largest Seafood supplier. However, unregulated growth in Vietnam's fishing industry has led to rampant violations of transnational crime, child labor, debt bondage, and the loss of billions of dollars in fishing revenues. In 2017, the European Union highlighted Vietnam's IUU-F shady practices and issued the GVN a "yellow card" as a warning to take corrective actions to counter IUU-F, otherwise facing further economic and trade sanctions. In response, The Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Directorate of Fisheries, and the Vietnam Coast Guard published a National Action Plan to combat IUU-F.²²

The time is ripe to pursue a U.S.–Vietnam-led cooperation and collaboration maritime security campaign plan that supports the U.S. and Vietnam's vital strategic and national interests in the fight against IUU-F. Vietnam is actively engaging in other security relationships that can provide a counterweight to China's growing power in Asia. China's aggressive, coercive gray zone tactics threaten Vietnamese territorial claims and fishing rights and have pushed Vietnam to pursue multilateral “omnidirectional” security and defense engagements to contain China's

²⁰ Environmental Justice Foundation, *Caught in the Net: Illegal Fishing and Child Labour in Vietnam's Fishing Fleet*, (London, UK: EJF, November 14, 2019), 6, <https://ejfoundation.org/resources/downloads/ReportVietnamFishing.pdf>; Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, *Whitebook: On Combating IUU Fishing in Vietnam*, (Hanoi, Vietnam: VASEP, January 12, 2018), <https://seafood.vasep.com.vn/combating-iuu-fishing/white-book-on-combating-iuu-fishing-in-vietnam>.

²¹ Environmental Justice Foundation, *Caught in the Net*, 13-20.

²² Environmental Justice Foundation, *Caught in the Net*, 6; Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, *Whitebook: On Combating IUU Fishing in Vietnam*.

expanding presence and dominance in the South China Sea. Although Vietnam remains hesitant to engage in bilateral or multilateral policies that can be construed as either anti-China or pro-U.S., Vietnam is coming to the realization that it will need to find a way to dampen the growing aggressive power of the CCP.²³ Vietnam fears that China's rise is proving unpeaceful as the CCP's growing assertiveness with its maritime militia, Coast Guard, and People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in the SCS has disrupted regional stability, violated international laws, norms, and standards, and upset the status quo in Asia.²⁴ Although China and Vietnam share close cultural, religious, economic, and political ties that bind Beijing and Hanoi at the highest levels of a "comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership,"²⁵ Vietnam is one of the few Southeast Asian countries with a history of standing up to challenge China's power. Sino-Vietnamese relations are characterized by both "cooperation and struggle."²⁶ However, China has long been Vietnam's most significant geopolitical threat based on over 1,000 years of historical Imperial Chinese tributary relations where several failed Vietnamese rebellions always ended in Vietnam's obligation and being beholden to Chinese dominance in Asia. This can be seen in Vietnam's challenge to go against China in its invasion of the Khmer Rouge in the 1970s and its willingness to challenge Chinese claims in the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Seas. The last naval battle fought in the South China Sea was in 1987 between Vietnam

²³ Scott W. Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation: Deepening Defense Ties among U.S. Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific*, RR 3125 (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2019), 249–250, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3125.html.

²⁴ Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 251, 258–260, 284, 288.

²⁵ Vietnam has several levels of bilateral defense and security relationships. The highest level is considered a "comprehensive strategic partnership," which only China, India, and Russia enjoy with Vietnam. The next highest is an "Extensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia," reserved for Vietnam-Japan relations. Next is a "Comprehensive Partnership" that the U.S. enjoys with Vietnam. The last is "Strategic Partners," which include Australia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and South Korea. Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 255–256.

²⁶ Gregory B. Poling, "WESTPAC Tensions Panel Discussion" (lecture, Naval War College, Newport, RI, October 5, 2022); Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 257, 284.

and China in the Battle of Johnson Reef, where the People's Republic of China (PRC) killed over 66 Vietnamese Commandos and sunk several Vietnamese ships. In 2014, Sino-Vietnamese relations were at another low when China set up an oil rig in Vietnamese-claimed South China Sea territorial waters.²⁷

In May 2021, the U.S. and Vietnam held the first Track II security dialogs to informally discuss innovative ways to expand bilateral security cooperation operations, activities, and investments. The results focused on capability development that supported a “strong, independent, and influential”²⁸ Vietnam that complemented purposeful U.S. security presence to defend international laws, norms, and standards and balance Chinese dominance in Southeast Asia.²⁹ Such efforts included intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance sharing, collaboration to support multilateral Southeast Asian Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE) initiatives, counter CCP information narratives that highlight Chinese coercion and illicit maritime activities, the expansion of ship-rider agreements to allow for Coast Guard to Coast Guard cooperation and the support to bolster bilateral and encourage multilateral naval security initiatives. As part of Vietnam's resolve to modernize its maritime law enforcement security force and protect the Vietnamese EEZ and fishing rights in the South China Sea, Vietnam built

²⁷ Poling, “WESTPAC Tensions Panel Discussion”; Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 257, 284.

²⁸ Jeffrey Ordaniel et al., *The United States and Vietnam: Chartering the Next 25 Years in Bilateral Security Relations*, Conference Report Vol. 21, CR1 (Honolulu, Hawaii: Issues & Insights – Pacific Forum International, September 2021), 5,

<https://pacforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/US-Vietnam-Issues-and-Insights-2021.pdf>.

²⁹ Vietnam's Maritime Militia is still nascent in its capabilities and cannot compare to China's quantity. According to the article, only .08% of the Vietnam militia force is dedicated to the maritime militia. In addition, China unlawfully declared a unilateral 3-month fishing ban around the South China Sea's Gulf of Tonkin and Paracel Islands. Vietnam's Fisheries Society and Ministry of Foreign Affairs have openly protested CCP declarations. They have demanded that China remove such fishing bans as Vietnam argues that it violates sovereign maritime rights within their EEZ. RFA Staff, “Vietnam Beefs up its Maritime Militia, Still Dwarfed by China's,” *Radio Free Asia (RFA)*, February 21, 2022, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/vietnam/maritime-militia-02212022081149.html>; Vietnam Politics and Law, “Vietnamese Fisheries Association Slams China's Fishing Ban in the South China Sea,” *Newswires*, May 6, 2022, <https://www.einpresswire.com/sources/vietnamnews.vn>; Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 249-250; Ordaniel et al., *The United States and Vietnam*, 4-6.

steel-hulled, machine-gun-armed maritime militia ships to enforce fishing rights and defend maritime security. The Government of Vietnam also subsidized several fishermen to enforce fishing rights as an extended maritime border force around Vietnam's EEZ claims through the South China Sea and challenge China's unilateral, illegal summer fishing ban. Thus, Vietnam is determined to uphold the internationally recognized rule of law to defend its sovereign fishing rights against illicit incursions.³⁰

On the diplomatic side, The White House published National Security Memorandum-11, which focused on combating IUU-F and associated labor abuses.³¹ The counter IUU-F Memorandum established an interagency working group focused on enforcing Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement and combating the corresponding Trafficking in Persons and the policy to "revitalize U.S. leadership in [regional] multilateral institutions."³² As discussed, IUU-F is a regional problem affecting many actors operating in and around the South China Sea. A counter-IUU-F campaign that includes multilateral cooperation deepens regional socioeconomic security and multilateral security cooperation, transcends legal EEZ disputes for the good of upholding international laws, norms, and standards that collectively resolve food security and environmental issues in the region.³³ In July 2022, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced an official statement reaffirming Vietnam's desire to collaborate with the U.S. on counter-IUU-F in the South China Sea. Following this statement, a U.S.-Vietnam bilateral

³⁰ RFA Staff, "Vietnam Beefs up its Maritime Militia, Still Dwarfed by China's"; Vietnam Politics and Law, "Vietnamese Fisheries Association Slams China's Fishing Ban in the South China Sea"; Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 249-250; Ordaniel et al., *The United States and Vietnam*, 4-6.

³¹ Joseph Biden, "Memorandum on Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Associated Labor Abuses," (National Security Memorandum NSM-11, Washington D.C.: President of the United States, June 27, 2022) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/06/27/memorandum-on-combating-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing-and-associated-labor-abuses/>.

³² Biden, "Memorandum on Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Associated Labor Abuses."

³³ Biden, "Memorandum on Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Associated Labor Abuses."

agreement was signed between the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and Vietnam's Director of Fisheries to help build the capacity of Vietnam's fisheries management, training, and assistance to enforcement. It provided the authorization for both countries to begin coordination.³⁴ The message is clear—Vietnam is inviting the U.S. to partner in the fight for maritime security in the SCS. The U.S. and Vietnam should seize the initiative and develop an integrated campaign plan to collaborate on a socioeconomic problem that could simultaneously challenge China's "gray-zone" activities in the SCS.

DEMONSTRATING THE CAMPAIGN: JOINT INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE (JIATF)—A CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COALITION

Creating a U.S.–Vietnam-led JIATF that prosecutes transnational illicit IUU-F could provide an employment and enforcement mechanism to execute a campaign plan and supports bilateral socioeconomic and national security concerns. The JIATF would synchronize and optimize interagency actions to counter IUU-F and unite multilateral actors under a common rules-based maritime security framework that contributes to regional stability and challenges the CCP's coercive geopolitical activities in the SCS.

JIATF-South Performance Variables

JIATF-South has become the "gold standard" of intergovernmental and interagency collaboration and coordination--the command center that synchronizes various military, interagency, intergovernmental, non-governmental, and multi-national capabilities to counter narco-terrorism.³⁵ What is unique to JIATF South is that it is not in the business of partner

³⁴ My Hanh, "Vietnam is Willing to Cooperate, and Share Experiences in Combating IUU Fishing," *VASEP*, July 22, 2022, <https://seafood.vasep.com.vn/combating-iuu-fishing/vietnam-s-action-campaign/vietnam-is-willing-to-cooperate-and-share-experiences-in-combating-iuu-fishing-24975.html>; "The United States, and Vietnam Sign an Agreement to Strengthen Fisheries Law Enforcement," U.S. Embassy and Consulate in Vietnam, July 22, 2022, <https://vn.usembassy.gov/the-united-states-and-vietnam-sign-an-agreement-to-strengthen-fisheries-law-enforcement>.

³⁵ Evan Munsing and Christopher J. Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South: The Best Known, Least Understood Interagency Success*, Institute for National Strategic Studies Strategic Perspectives no. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Center

capability development, nor is it solely an intelligence and information-sharing hub. Instead, JIATF-South's baseline is built on relationships of trust and is organized to conduct comprehensive end-to-end intelligence operations that support problems from "cradle to grave."³⁶ A JIATF model to counter IUU-F would serve as the enforcement and execution entity for integrated defense and national security campaigning. Figure 1 shows ten performance variables can be used to develop an operational and organizational approach for cross-functional teams. However, there are two key performance variables most applicable to the U.S.-Vietnam relationship and its mission to counter IUU-F—empowerment and culture.³⁷

for Strategic Research, Institute for National Strategic Studies, June 2011), 1,

<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/portals/68/documents/stratperspective/inss/strategic-perspectives-5.pdf>.

³⁶ "Cradle to Grave" refers to handling operations from inception to intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance (ISR), interdiction, arrest, and finally, prosecution. Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 21.

³⁷ Like Munsing and Lamb, this paper uses these same performance variables as a model to help replicate JIATF-South's success into JIATF IUU-F. Only two performance variables (highlighted in yellow boxes) in Figure 1 will be considered as they most apply to the U.S.-Vietnam relationship; empowerment and trust. However, a full deep-dive to analyze all ten performance models would provide a solid baseline for structuring, organizing, and resource the Task Force. Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 1, 33.

Level	Variables	Defined
Organization	Purpose	The broad, long-term mandate given to the team by its management as well as the alignment of short-term objectives with the strategic vision and agreement on common approaches within the team.
	Empowerment	Access to sufficient high-quality personnel, funds, and materials, and an appropriate amount of authority that allows for confident, decisive action.
	Support	The set of organizational processes that connect a team to other teams at multiple levels within the organization, other organizations, and a wide variety of resources the team needs to accomplish its mission.
Team	Structure	The “mechanics” of teams—design, collocation, and networks—that affect team productivity.
	Decisionmaking	The mechanisms that are employed to make sense of and solve a variety of complex problems faced by a cross-functional team.
	Culture	The shared values, norms and beliefs of the team—behavioral expectations and level of commitment and trust among team members.
	Learning	An ongoing process of reflection and action through which teams acquire, share, combine, and apply knowledge.
Individual	Composition	What individual members bring to the group in terms of skill, ability, and disposition.
	Rewards	Material incentives and psychological rewards to direct team members towards the accomplishment of the team’s mission.
	Leadership	The collection of strategic actions that are taken to accomplish team objectives, to ensure a reasonable level of efficiency, and to avoid team catastrophes.

Figure 1. Ten Organizational Performance Variables for Cross-Functional Teams³⁸

JIATF IUU-F Empowerment

Although Vietnam has taken aggressive steps to combat IUU-F, it has failed to accomplish its objectives fully due to the lack of capability, capacity, and resources to enforce meaningful or comprehensive regional fishing governance. Hence, it is not due to a lack of will, but a lack of empowerment.³⁹ To Vietnam, such empowerment comes from integrated

³⁸ Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 33.

³⁹ Some might argue that Vietnam lacks the willpower and fortitude to truly implement meaningful changes to counter IUU-F as a large portion of their government subsidizes the fishing industry and have yet to commit the law enforcement resources necessary to implement their own counter-IUU-F National Action Plan. However, Vietnam

multilateral defense and security partnerships that collectively enforce an internationally recognized rules-based order to help Vietnam enforce its counter-IUU-F policies and simultaneously challenge China's IUU-F activities in the SCS. Vietnam's "omnidirectional" approach to shaping the security environment can be seen via bilateral agreements that enable collaboration on mutually supporting maritime security interests. However, each partnership is unique, characterized as an economy of force effort, and lacks a fully integrated strategy that counters IUU-F activities in the SCS. Vietnam has bilateral maritime security agreements with Australia, Japan, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the U.S. --- some are even to help combat IUU-F.⁴⁰ To give a JIATF IUU-F the best chance of success, it must be given substantial resources, proper authority, and top-down cover. Due to already constrained Vietnamese security resources and the relative differences in sheer size, capacity, and capability of the U.S. military, compared to that of the Vietnam Defense Forces, it would be prudent for the U.S. to take on the preponderance of the JIATF IUU-F resourcing. In addition, U.S. leadership would also ensure that U.S. national interests and objectives are prioritized at an acceptable level of expense and risk. Joint force entities from across the Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Army, and Coast Guard would need to be active contributors and critical parts of the staff. Vietnam would support the JIATF IUU-F with its Coast Guard, Maritime Militia, Coastal Border Forces, Fisheries Surveillance Force, and Port Authorities. Both militaries must apportion maritime airborne patrol

has implemented the nine recommended changes from the Directorate General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG-MARE) of the European Commission (EU) and implemented bilateral agreements with several partners to help Vietnam counter-IUU-F. It is reaching out for more assistance from willing and like-minded partners as they know they have limited Maritime Law Enforcement resources to conduct policing actions throughout its 1 million square kilometer EEZ and the whole South China Sea. Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, *Whitebook: On Combating IUU Fishing in Vietnam*, 15-24; Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 249-250, 256, 259-276; Environmental Justice Foundation, *Caught in the Net*, 13-20.

⁴⁰ Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 249-250, 256, 259-276.

assets, helicopters, coast guard cutters, naval vessels, intelligence and information sensors, public affairs, and communications strategists to support MLE operations.⁴¹

The military must understand the restraints imposed by the 1898 Posse Comitatus Act (amended in 1981) that prohibits the military from conducting law enforcement actions directly on civilian populations or behalf of foreign governments. Hence, like JIATF-South, the military here would provide support (transportation, intelligence, information operations, training, etc.) to civilian Law Enforcement and the U.S. Coast Guard.⁴² Like JIATF-South, a U.S. Combatant Commander should have administrative control, and a U.S. Coast Guard Admiral should have operational and tactical control of JIATF IUU-F.⁴³ For authorities and oversight, USINDOPACOM would have Administrative Control (ADCON) of JIATF IUU-F as the Combatant Command for funneling resource allocations, specific authorities, and administrative and logistics support. Operational Control/Tactical Control (OPCON/TACON) authorities would remain under a combination of congressional and executive orders and negotiated agreements. This will allow the Task Force to focus on the mission at hand and insulate the command from commanders who attempt to utilize the JIATF to support their agendas. This model works well for JIATF-South and should be replicated for JIATF IUU-F.⁴⁴ Such a command relationship will align the command under the proper U.S. Coast Guard authorities to simultaneously support Title 10—national defense operations and Title 14—law enforcement operations.

Government and intergovernmental interagencies and multilateral communities of interest would be critical participants in the task force and bring additional authorities to help empower the team. Modeled after JIATF-South, such agencies could include representatives

⁴¹ Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 7.

⁴² Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 7–8.

⁴³ Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 36.

⁴⁴ Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 36–39.

from the Department of State, Department of Justice, Homeland Security, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Customs and Border Patrol Teams, and the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries. On the Vietnam side, it would include the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Coast Guard, Border Guards, Fisheries Surveillance Force, and the Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP).⁴⁵ Additional stakeholders include Liaison Officers from neighboring Southeast Asian countries embedded with law enforcement agencies and embassy teams.⁴⁶ In addition, Quad partners from Australia, Japan, and India would also be invited to join the task force.⁴⁷ These three countries already have bilateral agreements with Vietnam to combat IUU-F or have given monetary incentives and patrol boats to augment Vietnam's maritime security resources. Japan recently gave Vietnam patrol craft and conducted bilateral coast guard maritime law enforcement exercises to counter IUU-F in the South China Seas. In addition, Vietnam bought Japan's ASNARO-2 maritime radar satellite systems, which are also integrated with India's satellites to help gain better maritime domain awareness. It allows Vietnam to track and monitor vessels operating in the South China Sea. India also provided monetary support of USD 100 million for high-speed boats for coastal defense and established agreements with Vietnam to help support anti-piracy and maritime security initiatives. India also offered Vietnam several patrol craft, and in 2018, India and

⁴⁵ Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, *Whitebook: On Combating IUU Fishing in Vietnam*, 48; Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 4-6.

⁴⁶ Recommend the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, as they are all in the region and have issues with counter-IUU-F.

⁴⁷ The "Quad" is short for the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, a security cooperation entity that includes the four countries of the U.S., Australia, Japan, and India. The Quad aims to synchronize and optimize operations, activities, and investments characterized by the shared idea of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." The White House, "Quad Leaders' Joint Statement: The Spirit of the Quad," (official Statement, Washington D.C.: The White House, March 12, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/12/quad-leaders-joint-statement-the-spirit-of-the-quad/>. Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 261, 264–266, 272–273.

Vietnam conducted bilateral Coast Guard training exercises in Indian waters.⁴⁸ In addition, JIATF IUU-F would be given the authority to share intelligence and information to prosecute maritime targets. Such joint interagency and intergovernmental empowerment would provide the necessary resources to counter IUU-F in Southeast Asia.

JIATF IUU-F Culture – The Whole is Greater than the Sum of its Parts

Building a culture of trust between the U.S. and Vietnam is a crucial performance variable that should be adopted within the JIATF IUU-F organization. Vietnam's "4- NO's" national defense policy is rooted in its historical distrust and fear of other nation-states infringing on its autonomy and sovereignty.⁴⁹ Vietnam has suffered 1000 years of foreign dominance, which includes Vietnam's obligation as a tributary state under China, France's 100 years of Imperial Colonization, and what the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) considers the U.S.'s attempt to infringe on Vietnam's sovereignty or what the Vietnamese refer to as *Kháng chiến chống Mỹ* or "war against American aggressors."⁵⁰ Although Vietnam desires to build a stronger U.S.–Vietnam relationship, Hanoi remains suspicious of any U.S. intentions to seed democratic regime change. Furthermore, the GVN delicately balances security relationships between the U.S. and China and hesitates to adopt blatantly anti-China or pro-U.S. policies.⁵¹

Thus, a culture of trust in JIATF IUU-F can bridge trust deficits between the U.S. and Vietnam. Unique to JIATF-South is its diverse yet cohesive composition that seamlessly binds interagency and joint military capabilities, which relies heavily on its culture of trust. This trust is built on having open, collaborative, transparent policies and operations that respect diverse

⁴⁸ Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 261, 264–266, 272–273.

⁴⁹ The 4 Nos are: "no joining military alliances, no aligning with a particular state over another, no foreign bases on its soil to threaten the sovereignty of others, and "not using force or threatening the use of force in international relations." Ministry of National Defence, *2019 Vietnam National Defence*, Ngo Xuan Lich and Chi Thanh Pham (Hanoi, Vietnam; National Political Publishing House, October 2019) 71-78, 104-107.

⁵⁰ Ministry of National Defence, *2019 Vietnam National Defence*, 71-78, 104-107.

⁵¹ Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, pg. 282–284.

backgrounds and the inclusion of ideas at the expense of ceding control and giving credit to others—all for the good of supporting law enforcement.⁵² Collaborative planning groups should consider the proposals of all members regardless if they are adopted or executed. In addition, members should consider how actions would affect the parent commands that make up the task force or how actions could affect a country's political, economic, and cultural standing. Various communications, intelligence, and information-based operations must have transparency. This transparency can be a collaborative, coordination, and command watch center that synchronizes multi-domain intelligence and information sensors and provides a Common Intelligence Picture/Common Operating Picture for real-time maritime domain awareness and targeting. To mitigate language barriers and reduce miscommunications among participants, computers and cyber interface platforms must support open and translated communications, where data is readily available, understood, and shared. Integrating various interagency and intergovernmental operating procedures and actionable intelligence and information would ensure that the task force develops Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures aligned with how those agencies do business. Hence, having integrated operating procedures ensure that allocated assets and capabilities are appropriately used and not abused, further engendering the trust required for the JIATF's success. Thus, the synchronization and optimization across the joint, interagency, and intergovernmental entities build cohesion and trust that results in high-performing teams, where effects are compounded, and the results are greater than the sum of all of its disparate elements.⁵³

“INFORMATIZING”⁵⁴ THE CAMPAIGN: INFORM AND INFLUENCE OPERATIONS

⁵² Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 53–55.

⁵³ Munsing and Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force-South*, 30–56.

⁵⁴ Kitchen, “Informatized Wars: How China Thinks About Cyber.”

A third component of the integrated counter-IUU-F campaign is information operations. A robust bilateral U.S.–Vietnam communications and social media strategy that shapes a favorable U.S.–Vietnam strategic narrative can highlight Vietnam's rise as a credible and responsible regional actor, bolster more significant support for the counter-IUU-F campaign, and complicate China's ability to continue its uncontested malign activities. A robust media program must maximize all media and resources available to find as many approaches as possible to inform and influence demographics within key publics and target audiences. Media-to-media exchanges, embedded media on Coast Guard and Maritime Law Enforcement ships via approved ship-rider programs, traditional media and news features, the development of a joint and interagency social media playbook that includes ad-tech and e-commerce solutions, public school outreach education programs, an integrated Military Information Support Operations series, are all actions that can be taken to ensure that the U.S. and Vietnam are aligned with how to message the strategic narrative to create desired effects in the information domain.

Inform Operations

An integrated information operations campaign focused on domestic and foreign publics can promulgate a positive message demonstrating Vietnam's resolve to follow through with its National Action Plan to counter IUU-F, highlighting U.S. credible commitment to the region, and advertising the benefits of multilateral cooperation. Although Vietnam put together what they call a “communication campaign,”⁵⁵ Hanoi continues to struggle to convey the right message to its neighbors effectively; it takes IUU-F seriously and genuinely desires to be a

⁵⁵ Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, *Whitebook: On Combating IUU Fishing in Vietnam*, 5, 69-70.

responsible regional power that abides by international laws, norms, and standards.⁵⁶ Positive media messages will help improve Vietnam's tarnished international image after receiving the EU "Yellow Card" as one of the world's top violators of IUU-F.⁵⁷ Media messaging also can highlight the positive socioeconomic and security benefits gained when nations abide by international laws, norms, and standards. Media programs can also demonstrate the U.S.'s credible commitment as a dependable partner of choice for ASEAN partners, whose meaningful presence promotes regional security and stability.

Furthermore, the media can highlight the value and strength of multilateral partnerships and the effectiveness of integrated interagency capabilities to counter illicit and transnational crimes and activities. Therefore, pushing a robust positive inform messaging program can productively illuminate public opinion to favor the campaign itself and help garner the support needed to gain an advantage in the strategic narrative in Southeast Asia. As a result, highlighting success will breed follow-on successes and further encourage the JIATF IUU-F to continue its operations.

Influence Operations

An influence campaign can help counter misinformation and disinformation regarding JIATF IUU-F operations and publicly display the plethora of CCP illegal activities that the court of international public opinion can judge. A social media influence campaign can have a micro-targeted objective to exploit and widen any seams caused by "social polarization"⁵⁸ or highlight

⁵⁶ Xu Xiaodong and Chen Pingping, "Vietnam's Losing Battle with Illegal Fishing," *The ASEAN Post*, March 27, 2021, <https://theaseanpost.com/article/Vietnams-losing-battle-illegal-fishing>; Environmental Justice Foundation, *Caught in the Net*, 13-16.

⁵⁷ Receiving the EU Yellow Card due to Vietnam's prolific IUU-F violations was a national embarrassment on the international scene. It jumpstarted Vietnam to take IUU-F seriously as they immediately took action to help remove the yellow card. Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, *Whitebook: On Combating IUU Fishing in Vietnam*, 4-7.

⁵⁸ "Social polarization is the segregation within a society that emerges when factors such as income inequality, real-estate fluctuations, and economic displacement result in the differentiation of social groups from high-income to

specific yet biased facts and content that sympathizes with marginalized populations to go against a particular nation-state's policies.⁵⁹ In the case of IUU-F, Vietnam feels marginalized by China's overwhelming coercive "gray-zone" harassment actions, unilateral fishing bans, and IUU-F violations in their claimed territorial SCS EEZs.⁶⁰ Hence, an influence series could focus on highlighting factual CCP malign activities that are catastrophically damaging the marine life of the SCS, contributing to seafood shortages, violating international laws, and hurting the economic lifeblood of seafaring nations. In addition, focusing on IUU-F and its ties to social polarization between marginalized countries and the CCP could allow the targeted civil society in Vietnam to channel emotional responses into positive support of the counter-IUU-F campaign. Additionally, the use of domestic protests that are promulgated through the echo chambers of social media could garner nationalistic support for GVN actions and allow Vietnam the option to either turn up the rheostat to challenge the CCP with more aggressive tactics or provide Hanoi domestic leverage that will encourage Beijing to come to the negotiating table to de-escalate the situation and resolve conflicts diplomatically. This was seen during the 2014 Sino-Vietnamese SCS oil rig crisis when China decided to build a giant oil rig in the middle of the Paracel Islands, which was seen as a direct violation of Vietnamese sovereign territory. In response, Vietnam's state-controlled media flooded its civil society with flaming rhetoric that ignited domestic protests and rallies, which pressured the Government of Vietnam to take more aggressive actions to defend territorial rights. To de-escalate the situation and quell domestic unrest in Vietnam,

low-income." Noel Foster, "Russian Information Operations," (lecture, Naval War College, Newport, RI, October 4, 2022).

⁵⁹ Foster, "Russian Information Operations."

⁶⁰ Vien Dong, "Vietnam Protesting China's Fishing Ban in Water Hanoi Claims," *Voice of America*, June 09, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/vietnam-protesting-chain-s-fishing-ban-in-waters-hanoi-claims/6611187.html>; Phuong The Nguyen, "Vietnam's Maritime Militia is Not a Black Hole in the South China Sea," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, May 22, 2020, <https://amti.csis.org/vietnams-maritime-militia-is-not-a-black-hole-in-the-south-china-sea/>.

both Hanoi and Beijing were able to come to the negotiating table to appease Vietnam's public demands, mitigate anti-Chinese sentiment, and allow both sides to "save face" amongst the international community by negotiating a more "peaceful" bilateral solution.⁶¹

Thus, a series of information and influence operations can amplify the narrative to create a pro-U.S. and pro-Vietnam sentiment while energizing target audiences and providing the GVN with political and domestic leverage to protest or renegotiate Chinese actions in the SCS.

STANDING UP TO THE BULLY OF ASIA

One may argue that China will perceive counter-IUU-F campaigning as dangerously escalatory and will ignite further the security dilemma in the SCS, destabilizing a region already on the brink of conflict. Actions that directly threaten China's perceived sovereignty inside the 9-dashed line may instigate China to respond with overwhelming force to discipline Vietnam and its coalition partners for taking sides with the U.S. and take aggressive actions to ensure sea control within the 1st Island Chain. The CCP's actions during the Sino-Vietnam War in Cambodia in 1979 were to discipline and punish Vietnam for invading a close ally of China. Hence, there is precedence that the CCP would be willing to escalate actions to keep Vietnam in line.⁶² As a result, such a campaign will backfire as Vietnam and its coalition partners will be unwilling to absorb China's retaliatory punishment and will pull back and dilute their support for the counter-IUU-F campaign, leaving the U.S. alone to challenge China's accelerated aggression and malign activities in the SCS—thus, resulting in undesired conditions for Vietnam and causing the SCS to be far worse than before.

⁶¹ Frances Yaping Wang and Brantly Womack, "Jawing through Crisis: Chinese and Vietnamese Media Strategies in the South China Sea," *Journal of Contemporary China*, no. 28, issue 119 (February 2019): 712-712, 717, 719-720, 724, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10670564.2019.1580429?needAccess=true>.

⁶² Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 252.

However, the cost of inaction outweighs the risk of action. The future of sustainable fisheries in the SCS is rapidly declining at an irreparable rate.⁶³ Quick monetary gains from overexploitation and IUU-F have depleted fish stocks and marine biomass, which resulted in critical ecological and biological damage to one of the world's once most diverse Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs).⁶⁴ Without intervention, this continued course will threaten Vietnam's food security and further widen the socioeconomic security gap, increasing the risk of conflict over marine resources. Although China is the main culprit and largest proliferator of IUU-F, this illegal activity is not a problem that is solely directed at China.⁶⁵ IUU-F is conducted by nearly all Southeast Asian seafaring states, which makes Asia and the Western Pacific region the worst violators.⁶⁶ Although the situation is improving, Vietnam must take additional actions to remove the EU's "Yellow Card" and prevent the EU's issuance of a "Red Card" that will shut off all fishing imports to Europe and risk the loss of billions of dollars in revenue and international censure; two outcomes that Vietnam is already struggling to prevent.⁶⁷ Hence, pursuing an IUU-F campaign plan is worth the risk as it will support cooperative efforts to improve Southeast Asian socioeconomic security and regional ecological sustainability—two vital national interests for Vietnam.⁶⁸

Confronting the "bully of Asia" will come with risks that may unleash China's vengeance on weaker states that do not have the capability and capacity to take it alone. A joint interagency

⁶³ Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 2–3, 5–8, 10.

⁶⁴ Sumaila et al., *Sink or Swim*, 5–8.

⁶⁵ Macfadyen and Hosch, *The Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Index 2021*, 31.

⁶⁶ Macfadyen and Hosch, *The Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing Index 2021*, 31, 35.

⁶⁷ To Van Phuong and Robert S. Pomeroy, "Combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Removing Yellow Card From European Commission (EC): Vietnam's Determined Actions," *Asian Fisheries Science: Journal of the Asian Fisheries Society*, vol. 35, issue 1 (2022): 20-22, <https://www.asianfisheriessociety.org/publication/abstract.php?id=combating-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-iuu-fishing-and-removing-yellow-card-from-european-commission-ec-vietnams-determined-actions>.

⁶⁸ Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers, *Whitebook: On Combating IUU Fishing in Vietnam*,

coalition will help offset such wrath and create an overwhelming dilemma that will interfere with China's ability to expand its influence in the SCS. No longer will China only deal with bilateral coercion policies that can be handled and managed unilaterally; instead, it will face a barrage of multilateral actions that will complicate and counterweight Beijing's excessive regional aggression. Furthermore, suppose China decides to counter the IUU-F campaign with escalatory actions. In that case, it risks isolation and a loss of trust from neighboring countries that may be more encouraged to change their strategic hedging policies and become less dependent on China. Thus, neighboring states can choose to increasingly diversify their economic and security portfolios with other nations like Australia, Japan, India, and the U.S. and look for other partners that are less coercive than China. Moreover, China's escalation of military actions and use of force in the SCS may invite additional U.S. military and other Quad allies to increase the presence of maritime security patrol activities to defend weaker countries, assure protection of economic interests, and support overall regional stability; a result that complicates China's geopolitical ambitions.⁶⁹ Thus, China's retaliatory responses to a counter-IUU-F campaign may result in self-sabotage, where actions meant to gain advantages would result in unfavorable conditions, a "loss of face,"⁷⁰ and weakened international credibility.

CONCLUSION

The U.S. and Vietnam have a unique opportunity to action an integrated campaign plan that uses all levers of national power to mitigate vulnerabilities synchronously, capitalize on

⁶⁹ Paraphrased in the cited document, a prominent Vietnamese foreign affairs journalist highlighted that "... Beijing's ultimate geopolitical objective is to push the United States out of Asia-Pacific..." Hence, actions that would increase U.S. presence in the region would be self-defeating to China." Harold et al., *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation*, 258.

⁷⁰ The concept of respect is an important and valued character trait woven into the fabric of Asian culture and defines the nature of relationships. A "loss-of-face" would be equivalent to "a loss of respect" and is a considerable concern for Asian countries as it infers that one has brought such disrespect and loss of credibility on themselves and should be embarrassed, shamed, and taught a lesson.

opportunities, and challenge threats to regional stability. Allowing China to continue along a path of maritime coercion that threatens state sovereignties in the SCS and violates international laws, norms, and standards will not only normalize malign activities in the region but also embolden China to expand such activities in other global LMEs and encourage other state actors to do the same—thus, destabilizing the global fishing industry and proliferating worldwide food security concerns. Continuing on the path of inaction will undoubtedly result in an inevitable state of heightened conflict with China – it is not a matter of if, but when. Thus, countermeasures must be developed to stop such a destabilizing trajectory. Now is the time to push an offensive multilateral counter-IUU-F integrated deterrence campaign to shape how this inevitable conflict will manifest.

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