SANCTIONING TO DETER

A NEW APPROACH IS NEEDED IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

Ngo Di Lan (Brandeis - SCIS)
Dr. Truong Minh Huy Vu (SCIS)
OVERVIEW

THE PROBLEM

NATURE OF THE CHINESE STRATEGY IN THE SCS

WHY THE CURRENT APPROACH HAS FAILED

SANCTIONING TO DETER: FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

CONCLUSION
China’s newly assertiveness

Difficult to manage/resolve the territorial disputes peacefully

Threatens regional peace and stability

Ineffective responses to China’s strategy

Regional arms race
NATURE OF THE CHINESE STRATEGY

- Change territorial status quo gradually
- Full-spectrum diplomacy
- Low intensity provocations
- Insist on bilateral nature of the dispute
- Non-lethal use of force
WHY THE CURRENT APPROACH HAS FAILED

- China has neither slowed down its land reclamation activities, nor showed flexibility in resolving the territorial disputes.
- In fact, China has been militarizing the South China Sea dispute to an extent not seen before.
- There is a “mismatch” between our strategy and China’s strategy.
- Traditional deterrence cannot work against “salami-slicing”
SANCTIONING TO DETER: FLEXIBLE RESPONSE

Immediate  Discrete

Targeted  Proportionate

Flexible response
WHY FLEXIBLE RESPONSE MIGHT WORK

- It imposes immediate (tit-for-tat) costs on China’s escalatory actions
- It sends firm and unambiguous signals to Beijing
- It builds legitimacy for tougher responses vis-à-vis China
- Yet it limits the risk of escalatory spiral
CONCLUSION

• We are facing a serious problem in the South China Sea as China is behaving evermore assertively
  ⇒ Hinders prospects for peaceful resolution of the territorial disputes
  ⇒ Undermines regional trust, peace and stability
• This shows that our current approach has clearly failed
• Our best hope is a new approach: Flexible Response strategy
• Flexible Response can be implemented unilaterally or multilaterally
• Flexible Response works by sending clear signals to China and imposing costs for each and every Chinese escalatory action
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!