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CHINA’S SECURITY CONCEPT
OF ANTI-ACCESS /AREA-DENIAL – AA/AD

Abstract

Military security in East Asia and the Pacific region is of growing interest worldwide as the region has a significant influence on the global economy and politics. Stability there, is important not only for each individual nation but also globally. Currently, China is still continuing its economic development, although at a slower, but still impressive rate of progress. The country also systematically develops the capabilities of the People’s Liberation Army in order to guarantee their territorial integrity and security. That development is connected with the protection of the Pacific coastline within the Anti-Access/Area-Denial concept coupled with the ‘Two Island Chain Strategy. It is paralleled by a widely discussed US AirSea Battle doctrine developed towards the Western Pacific Theatre of Operations. Both are recognized as possible threats to security, as the Asian nations perceive them, especially AA/AD, as tools to increase the big nations’ military capabilities which could lead to a conflict.

Keywords: Anti-Access/Area-Denial; East Asia – Pacific, international relations, security.

Introduction

The ongoing modernization of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is one of widely observed processes and under general and special attention as it is represented by all the countries of the East Asia. It includes not only Asian nations but is also of interest and cause of special attention and concerns to the US and other non-Asian countries such as Australia and some European nations which are concerned about such developments. There are many reasons for that and particularly the security dimension causes concern developing a tendency of smaller nations and crucial actors to strengthen bilateral relations looking for strategic partners to enhance national security. Similarly, alongside political relations, all the major actors are investing in military capabilities looking to enhance the military domain of their security. Currently, the main security focus is on observing developments in the East Asia – Pacific area as this is an arena of maritime disputes with growing potential for unexpected confrontation between countries involved in them. It is related to a widely discussed concept called Anti-Access/Area-Denial or AA/AD, part of China’s strategy to protect its east coastline, which is the hub of their economy and the main driver of development for the country through the last decades. China wants to get rid of the potential threats to their coastal waters by developing the required force projection

¹ Opinions expressed by the author are his own views and they do not reflect in any way the official policy or position of the Baltic Defence College, or the governments of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania.
capabilities. It is mainly connected with a constant investment into navy, air force and long-range weapon systems. It has been underpinned by a continuous enhancement of their nuclear weapon capability as a critical deterrent factor. The challenge is however, that other regional players are not recognizing such an approach as defensive in nature and there are strongly suspicions that the overall PLA development, after solidifying its advantage over others, could be used to expand Beijing’s influence, including territorial expansion. The territorial disputes in the South China Sea and also the East China Sea are already treated as confirmation of such accusations.

This paper focuses on the development of the concept of Chinese Anti-Access/Area-Denial (AA/AD) and it is presented in connection with the “Two Island Chain Strategy”. The overview of AA/AD is presented and discussed also in the context of the Air Sea Battle doctrine being developed by US Armed Forces in relation to the Western Pacific Theatre of Operations. Although the paper discusses the military dimension, it also covers non-military aspects of the AA/AD as it is applicable to the support of national interests. The AA/AD concept is closely linked with the Two Island Chain Strategy as they support each other, contributing to the enhanced military security of China. They are also related to the economic situation of the country including the necessity to create the preconditions to continue the program ‘Go West’ and implement the ‘One belt and One road’ idea, visualized by the ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’ and the 21st century ‘Maritime Silk Road’.

Anti-Access/Area-Denial as a concept

The Anti-Access/Area-Denial concept is not new historically as many nations created such an approach in the past to prevent attack from an enemy, deny freedom of action and to preserve national sovereignty as a desired end state. It is closely linked with operational factors and apart from time and force, the space factor plays an important role. The importance of the space factor is explained by Milan Vego in his book *Operational Warfare* as follows: “without the ability to conduct large-scale movements on land, at sea, and in the air, operational warfare is essentially an empty concept. The success of any major operation or campaign depends on the free movement of one’s forces in the theater.” An example would be Great Britain as a country, which having a specific geostrategic location, has decided to develop a powerful navy; this is a basic anti-access factor. Such decisions proved to be very effective as the country preserved sea control of the surrounding seas and specifically the English Channel denying other nations’ armed forces the opportunity to land on its territory. It proved to be effective, in close coordination with the Royal Air Force, against German plans to invade the island. Similarly, during the Cold War both sides of the Iron Curtain developed a variety of military units and weapons systems, along with the military related infrastructure, to deny an opponent access to their territories and to negate freedom of manoeuvre within their own countries. Lately Iran’s anti-access and area-denial concept has been widely discussed as the country was and is recognized as a threat to stability in the Middle East. It is especially important in relation to the U.S interests and alliances in the whole region. According to Mark Gunzinger from the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, the AA/AD “strategy may combine irregular tactics and improvised weapons with the technologically advanced capabilities to deny or limit the U.S. military’s access to close-in bases and restrict its freedom of manoeuvre through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran’s ‘hybrid’

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A2/AD strategy could exploit the geographic and political features of the Persian Gulf region to reduce the effectiveness of U.S. military operations. Such an approach may not, in itself, be a war-winning strategy for Iran, but, significantly, raising the costs or extending the timelines of a U.S. military intervention may, however, create a window of opportunity for Iran to conduct acts of aggression or coercion. This case also presents another aspect of the concept, which is to create the conditions for a weaker enemy to face a stronger one. Such a scenario is connected with a variety of risks: deciding to conduct offensive operations could entail heavy casualties and losing prestige when being involved in a protracted conflict.

The concept is also linked with Europe, as recognized by Douglas Barrie in the well-respected Military Balance, who is a Senior Fellow for Military Aerospace and responsible for the International Institute for Strategic Studies in air power capabilities. He claims that “following Moscow’s 2014 annexation of Crimea, assessment of Moscow’s military modernization and its introduction and deployment of improved conventional systems has been increasingly accompanied by voices within NATO cautioning that an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy is not just a consideration for the Asia-Pacific or the Gulf regions. As well as Crimea, the Baltic region is vulnerable or suited – depending on perspective – to such an approach. Senior NATO officials, including General Philip Breedlove, the supreme allied commander of Europe, and General Frank Gorenc, commander of the allied air command, raised concerns over A2/AD in a European context in 2015.” To some extent, such a concern could be related to the situation taking place in Ukraine as Russia has gained territorial control over a part of its ‘near border’ at the same time extending its strategic depth that in the past proved to be a critical factor against any invasion coming from the west. By reinforcing the Kaliningrad District and Crimea’s military units, and developing Arctic capabilities, Russia is enhancing its anti-access and area-denial options. Such actions “among others, have contributed to an increasingly unpredictable and unstable Euro-Atlantic security environment. In response, NATO has taken defensive measures to protect and assure its members and will continue to do so as long as necessary.” As regards such developments, NATO decided to invest not only in military instruments of power but its Allies also, "in response to Russia’s aggressive actions to NATO’s east, as well as to violent instability to NATO’s south, agreed to the Readiness Action Plan at the Wales Summit in 2014”. The plan includes immediate reinforcement of NATO’s presence in the eastern part of the Alliance, which has been in place since May 2014 (assurance measures), and longer-term changes to NATO’s force posture (adaptation measures). The adaptation measures will increase NATO’s readiness and allow the Alliance to deal with any security challenges, from wherever they might come. Implementation was ongoing throughout 2015.” So, assurance measures and adaptation measures are an investment into NATO’s anti-access and area-denial capabilities, which are both a deterrence and define related decisions.

Thus, the Chinese approach is not new in nature, however the speed and decisiveness of its development are rather impressive, and already causing concerns for the US and its regional allies, and requiring counteractions. The essence of anti-access is

3 Read in details in: M. Gunzinger, C. Dougherty, Outside-in: Operating from Range to Defeat Iran’s Anti-Access and Area-Denial Threats, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington 2011, p. 21-22.
5 The Secretary General’s Annual Report 2015, NATO Brussels 2016, p. 19.
related to “those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area”\(^6\). From China’s perspective, when facing the Pacific, it is mainly related to the sea and air approaches to the mainland, and uses a variety of weapon platforms including space located assets and other non-kinetic capabilities. Among them, it is worth mentioning the Chinese network-centric capabilities as an integral element of asymmetric and conventional military operations\(^7\). It is linked with an information warfare strategy called, “Integrated Network-Electronic Warfare (INEW),”\(^8\) recognized in official documents of the PLA to support both offense and defense. It is partially an effect of understanding the US advantages in the field of modern technologies, and such innovative and advanced concepts as INEW are aimed both at reducing precision attack options and at decreasing capability gaps. Area-denial is related to “actions and capabilities, usually of shorter range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area. Area-denial capabilities target forces in all domains, including land forces”\(^9\). The concepts do not exclude the presence of adversary forces within a theatre of operations; anti-access is focused rather on an opponent’s follow-on-forces, to prevent them landing overwhelming capabilities on the mainland. If successful, it could result in such losses and delays that further operations will not create the conditions to continue successful operations, creating a risk of failure and growing losses. At the same time, on the mainland, the PLA and the People’s Armed Police would be conducting continuous area-denial operations, denying enemy deployment of units and defending critical infrastructure. The weapon systems could be used for both types of operations, for example, the air force would perform offensive and defensive counter air sorties within anti-access and close air support and air interdiction sorties within area-denial. Also land based systems could be used effectively based on their range and accuracy\(^10\). Similarly, the navy could have significant effects against an adversary navy on blue waters within anti-access and on littoral waters within area-denial.

As presented above, the military aspect of the concept is very important but it could only be a part of AA/AD operations. There are other instruments of national power\(^11\) which should be considered as core constituents. From the US perspective “A2 challenges are intended to exclude our forces from a foreign theatre or deny effective use and transit of the global commons. More broadly, A2 challenges might first involve political and economic

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\(^9\) Ibid, p. 6.


exclusion, where competitor states actively attempt to deny the United States the broad political and economic influence it has long enjoyed. In military terms, this may translate into blanket denial of basing, staging, transit, or over-flight rights\textsuperscript{12}. Such processes could be conducted during peacetime by political actions to deny or weaken regional alliances and support. It could be strongly underpinned by the use of economic tools especially against weaker economies which are just recovering after internal problems or as an outcome of external crises both regional or global. In the case of Asia, both tools could be used by China towards their neighbours to achieve support or just cause them to be neutral, denying use of their bases or facilities to potential adversaries. The tools could be, for example, loans based on favourable conditions, foreign direct investments, promoting ‘win-win’ solutions and other economic profits. A good example is the “One Belt, One Road” project which is important for the current leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and not only for economic reasons. It involves two stages: the maritime one called the ‘21st-century Maritime Silk Road’ and the land one called the ‘Silk Road Economic Belt’. During an annual central conference on economic affairs in December 2014, president Xi described it as one of the major future priorities for China\textsuperscript{13}. Apart from domestic demands, the need to more deeply integrate “with the global economy than ever before, preventing recession” has been recognized and it “increasingly requires China to exert greater influence on the international order and in countries in which its economic interests are substantial”\textsuperscript{14}. Involving neighbouring nations, unprofitable economic concepts could influence political decisions based on the value of perceivable and usually desired benefits. Therefore, new initiatives supporting integration regionally and globally are recognized and authorized by the Chinese leadership as priorities. This is a rather comprehensive approach, as military tools could not be the main ones used to achieve the desired end state. Additionally, an advantage could be Chinese minorities living and conducting a variety of businesses in many countries in the region.

**Air Sea – Battle doctrine facing AA/AD challenges**

Currently, in order to face the military and non-military developments in East Asia, the AirSea Battle doctrine is under consideration “to support the overall US strategy for preserving stability in the Western Pacific Theatre of Operations (WPTO)\textsuperscript{15} and it is directly linked with the Chinese concept of anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) and the capabilities, that are under development to implement it. It includes both conceptual ideas, and weapon procurement decisions, connected with the so called US ‘pivot to the Pacific’. To achieve the desired effect, the “AirSea Battle must for geostrategic factors, such as US treaties and legal obligations to defend formal allies and friends in the region. Even more importantly, the AirSea Battle is not a US only concept. Allies such as Japan and Australia,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[14] Ibid.
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and possibly others, must play important roles in enabling sustaining a stable military balance.”¹⁶ The AirSea Battle consists of two phases. The first, initial one, is conducted on differing execution timelines, at the beginning of a conflict, it is to follow four distinct lines of operation¹⁷:

✓ Surviving the initial attack and limiting damage to the US and allied forces and bases;
✓ Executing a blinding campaign against PLA battle networks;
✓ Executing a suppression campaign against PLA long-range ISR and strike systems;
✓ Seizing and sustaining the initiative in the air, sea, space and cyber domains.

The second phase, conducted within a variety of parallel operations, is to win any protracted conventional conflict, and it is predicted to include¹⁸:

✓ Executing a protracted campaign that includes sustaining and exploiting the initiative in various domains;
✓ Conducting “distant blockade” operations;
✓ Sustaining operational logistics; and
✓ Increase industrial production (especially precision-guided munitions).

According to the US Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), “the intent of AirSea Battle is to improve integration of air, land, naval, space, and cyberspace forces to provide combatant commanders with the capabilities needed to deter and, if necessary, defeat an adversary employing sophisticated anti-access/area-denial capabilities. It focuses on ensuring that joint forces will possess the ability to project force as required, to preserve, and defend U.S. interests well into the future”¹⁹. This is the response to the regional challenges and the geography, which creates the need of such an approach, in contrast to the European Theatre of Operations, in which an Air-Land Battle doctrine was selected as a solution to face a threat coming from heavy land formations advancing from the East. In the case of the Pacific, “in addition to strikes from land-based ASBMs and submarine-launched anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM), major US surface combatants can anticipate barrages of cruise missiles launched from PLAN Air Force (PLANAF)²⁰ and PLA(NF) aircraft. The primary PLANAF maritime strike platform is the H-6K naval aircraft.”²¹ According to Andrew Krepinevich from the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, “it appears Chinese air and naval air forces will soon field some five hundred modern, fourth-generation fighters and strike-fighters, or about twelve CVW equivalents of strike aircraft. With support from China’s A-50 AWACS and H-6U and H-79MKK tankers, these aircraft will be able to contest US forces for control of the air in the Western Pacific and to strike targets at ranges beyond 850 nm”²². Although, such an assessment could be exaggerated, especially in relation to CVW equivalents, such developments must be carefully considered by the Pentagon when planning a defence budget and implementing necessary changes in force disposition, organization and command and control structures. It is combined with geography, as presented in Fig. 1, and a requirement to contain PLA in

¹⁶ J. van Tol, et all, AirSea Battle: A Point of Departure, p. xi.
¹⁷ Ibid., p. xiii.
¹⁸ Ibid., p. xiv.
¹⁹ Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), op. cit., p. 4.
²⁰ The overview or air power in Asia was discussed in: K. Załęski, Z. Śliwa, The Air Power Role in Asia, Air Force Academy, Dęblin 2015.
²² Ibid., p. 21. CVW - carrier air wing; nm – nautical miles.
an orchestrated effort with allies, and deny the creation of overwhelming capabilities within the maritime and air domains, if those vast territories were within the weapon systems’ effective range.

Fig. 1. Visualization of the PLA’s Anti-Access/Area-Denial capabilities
Source: J. Van Tol et al., A. K repinevich, AirSea Battle, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington 18th May 2010, slide 10.

Among the regional allies, the US is seeking closer relations with India and also other smaller nations, in order to enhance its own footprint and extend possible options, while denying them to other actors in the region. However, development of the desired capabilities is rather complex, and costly, and also requires the implementation of modern technologies, and is time consuming. In 2014, it has already been recognized that the US Pacific air forces do not fulfil expectations related to acquisition of new equipment. According to the former Pacific Air Forces Commander General Carlisle, “resources have not yet been made available to key elements of the policy due to other commitments”[23]. If budget sequestration procedures are enforced in the future, causing automatic spending cuts, it will definitely influence military spending, and capabilities, and limit the US influence in some regions. Even at present the US armed forces are occupied, being actively involved in many global theatres of operations. Moreover, the current security situation in Europe plays a role as it requires reconsidering the allocation of resources, resources that could otherwise be dedicated to East Asia. It is partially supportive of PLA efforts to develop indigenous capabilities by providing more time to further develop and implement the political and economic side of AA/AD. The US is also not in a position to rely on military support coming from smaller regional powers as these powers are very limited both in quantity and quality. However, it is not only about capabilities, but also the geographical location of those countries. Moreover, access to their infrastructure is very important for the US armed forces, especially when this infrastructure fulfils the US armed forces.

force’s requirements regarding compatibility. As for the present, great support is being achieved by strengthening the strategic partnership with Asian partners, for instance, Japan and South Korea, and by building new relations. An example of new relations could be the India-U.S. Delhi Declaration of Friendship signed in January 2015, which states that both nations recognize “the importance of strengthened bilateral defence ties.”\(^{24}\) Another one is the Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) between the US and the Philippines signed on 28th April 2014. The EDCA “provides a legal framework for the increased rotational presence of US armed forces in the Philippines. The precise details of when, how many, what types and the location of this rotational presence will be worked out in the future. This may well prove to be a test case of the ability of the US to rebalance its forces in Southeast Asia”\(^{25}\). Such strategic partnerships enhance the ability of the US to counter the consequences of the PLA build-up, by having old and new options for basing their military capabilities. It is valuable as many countries prefer balancing Chinese influences

‘Two Island Chains Strategy’ as an AA/AD facilitator

It is important that China has made the effort during recent years to make agreements in relation to land borders, and only the one with India has remained unresolved. Those treaties were important for Beijing as a precondition for a more insistent ‘shift toward the maritime domain’. The border issues were recognized by Jakub Grygiel, “the stabilization of China’s land borders may be one of the most important geopolitical changes in Asia of the past few decades. From a tense frontier similar to that of Ming dynasty China, it is turning into a stable one, that does not require an enormous expenditure of military strength or political attention. This might free China from having to devote resources and attention to its land borders, allowing it to pursue a more aggressive maritime geostrategy.”\(^{26}\) The stabilization of the border situation, especially in relation to Russia and Central Asia, was a factor supporting the security of the nation on the ground. However, the security of the east coast is still recognized as a challenge, requiring action to be taken, as the maritime domain was historically less important than the land one. Economic development, the importance of sea lines of communications, and the growing national ambitions of China have changed the situation. Maritime military security proved to be more important, requiring the movement of threats away from the coastline and the improvement of the geostrategic situation. In that context AA/AD was the desired concept for the achievement of the desired status of security\(^{27}\).


Fig. 2. The First and Second Island Chains concept.


The concept is also connected with the ‘Two Island Chains Strategy and also the development of the ‘String of Pearls.’ The ‘Two Island Chain Strategy’ is based on “two key island chains, which form the geographic basis for expanding China’s maritime sphere of influence. While these have not been formally defined as such by PLA leaders, the “First Island Chain” is generally thought to run from the Japanese main islands through the Ryukus, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Borneo, thus roughly bounding the East and South China Seas. The “Second Island Chain” stretches from the north, from the Bonin Islands southward through the Marianas, Guam, and the Caroline Islands, encompassing the western Philippine Sea”\(^\text{28}\). The visualization is presented on the picture above.

In order to implement it from a space point of view, combined with a force operational factor, it clearly requires a strong air force and navy to project power out from the mainland. As for now, it is also closely related to maritime disputes in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, both being crucial to extending power throughout both island chains, underpinning increased military reach\(^\text{29}\). Concerning the geographical location of small and rocky islands, they have significant importance, as they could be used to deploy,


limited but capable military systems, as is already exemplified by the deployment of air

defines assets on Woody Island in the disputed Paracel chain or the building of airfields on

small islands e.g. on the Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratly Islands of the South China Sea.

Those actions are already supporting the ‘First Island Chain Strategy’ by extending the

range of military capabilities. For example “Fiery Cross reef has a runway long enough to

land a Chinese H-6G bomber, using runway requirements derived from the Russian Tu-

16K, and assuming that the runway has been reinforced. A bomber like this could perform

combat operations within 3,500 miles of the reclaimed reef. Fiery Cross would also be

capable of landing and deploying the Chinese Shenyang J-11 fourth-generation fighter,

using runway requirements derived from the Russian Su-27 fighter, which would be

capable of combat operations within 870 miles of the reef.”

They are significant developments, causing growing fears among neighbours, and concerns regarding the US

armed forces freedom of navigation and operations. Apart from combat power, the

deployment of special aircraft could support air and navy operations and could enhance

situational awareness using aircraft and land based reconnaissance systems. Such

installations are not single pieces of infrastructure and their growing number provides an

increasing number of courses of action. Thus, the proactive policy towards developing

further island chains will be continued in the long-term, along with the continuous upgrade

of force projection capabilities.

As for now small disputed islands and bigger ones such as Taiwan, the Philippines

and Japan are significantly restricting the freedom of movement of the PLA Navy (PLAN)

providing a strategic advantage to the powerful US Navy and its allies. Currently PLAN is

under constant development, investing in aircraft carriers and capable submarine fleets, but

it will take time to match the capabilities presented by the US and also the Japanese Navy.

PLAN’s development is an important AA/AD component, which could be defensive in

nature, but also represents offensive capabilities. As mentioned previously, many weapon

systems could be easily used for any type of conventional operation. Taiwan is especially

important, being a key element within the ‘First island chain,’ being as stated by General

MacArthur, “an unsinkable aircraft carrier,” or “the cork in the bottle” of the South China

Sea as expressed by Admiral Ernest King. In that context, all the disputes make sense and

the long-term visionary undertaking is acknowledging that to achieve its aims, as the effect

of its pragmatic approach, Beijing will follow its proactive policy towards regional

adversaries. For China, the US factor, connected with its overwhelming navy capability to

impose maritime a blockade, is the real concern, but Beijing also has a strategic patience

stemming from the rich and long history of the Middle Kingdom. The dominance of the

‘Two Island Chains’ would support the denial of a US presence, and question the

preservation of current military bases. As a side effect, it could cause the isolation of close

Washington allies by having real military capabilities moved forward and having in their

range key military and civilian infrastructure. It could even cause reconsiderations related
to regional strategic partnerships.

Figure 2 and Figure 1 present the role of the respective PLA services. Within the

‘Second Island Chain,’ anti-access capabilities could be a core constituent of AA/AD; and

the ‘First Island Chain’ could play a role in area denial in all the dimensions of a

contemporary battlefield. Both must however be supported by well synchronized service

30 Airpower in the South China Sea, the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative and the Center for Strategic


31 Xu Shiquan, To Abandon Taiwan or Not, That’s Not the Question, China-United States Exchange

Foundation, Hong Kong 25th March 2014, http://www.chinausfocus.com/peace-security/to-abandon-
taiwan-or-not-thats-not-the-question/ [accessed: 4th April 2016].
capabilities based on their complementarity. As a result, the enemy approaching the coastline from the direction of the Pacific would be exposed to constant attack from a variety of combat platforms at their maximum range. Similarly, major military infrastructure of allied forces could be endangered by a direct attack from long-range precision weapon systems. The navy, long-range aircraft, and missile forces would be the major contributors to such operations. As the enemy approached the mainland, other air and land based long-range combat systems would be used to increase resistance and inflict growing enemy loses by intensifying the density of fire which would grow with every nautical mile. On the ground, the whole military potential would be used, including the People’s Armed Police, security services, and regional militias implementing the concept of ‘people’s war’ (chinn. renmin zhanzheng). The vast territory would enable a growing resistance, creating strategic depth. The implementation of the strategy mentioned above will however take decades, as control of the desired inlands and development of the necessary capabilities is not easy to achieve, requiring time and resources. It will also face counteractions from regional opponents speeding up an arms race. The important fact, the core element, is the reunification of the Chinese nation in regards to Taiwan. President Xi Jinping when describing the ‘Chinese Dream’ said that, “The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation ‘is a dream of the whole nation, as well as of every individual.” It is not only about reunification but also about fulfilling the “Two Island Chain” strategy and extending the reach of theAA/AD doctrine.

**Conclusion**

Maritime disputes dynamics are evolving, especially since “China has become increasingly assertive of its claims to disputed maritime territories in the East and South China Seas, and remains committed to a relatively high rate of military spending to project its power into the region in the coming years.” Consequently, it results in the reaction of all other actors linked with this particular subject of international relations. However, for China, maritime disputes are a part of a larger concept, a concept which is linked to the extension of the control of sea lines of communication by enhancing friendly relations and supporting the building of navy infrastructure and ports along the south Asian coastline. Therefore, India, is also afraid of Chinese considerations related to the Indian Ocean, and even recognizes involvement in antipiracy in Somali waters as an excuse to penetrate the ocean. Thus, although “China is not yet on the scene, but given the pace of its naval modernization, energy interests and quite clearly articulated goals, it is inevitable that it will seek to be, and the Indian Ocean played for before long”. The Indian Ocean is an important factor for global trade, being a critical ‘commerce highway’, so control of sea

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33 Ibid.


lines of communication in these waters is important to all Asian economies.\(^{38}\) It is recognized by Robert Kaplan, who thinks that China “wants to secure port access throughout the South China Sea and adjacent Indian Ocean, which connect the hydrocarbon-rich Arab-Persian World to the Chinese seaboard.”\(^{39}\) The rivalry between Beijing and New Delhi is peaceful, but the enlargement of their navies’ and air forces’ abilities to project power is an attribute that could cause willingness to challenge the opponent in the future. In that context, the “Two Island Chain Strategy” and the AA/AD doctrine could be treated as short term projects, preconditions to the extending of influence over regional and global matters.

The growing concerns among smaller nations about the development of the PLA are visible in research performed by the Pew Research Centre; people in a number of Asian countries were asked if they thought “China’s growing military power is a good thing or a bad thing for [their] country.” A perception of danger arising from Chinese military growth was recognized by 96% of Japanese, and 91% of South Koreans, but “Australia and the Philippines were next, at 71 percent and 68 percent. After that, however, there is a marked drop-off in concern over China’s military. Indonesia had 39 percent say China’s military power was a bad thing, Malaysia 20 percent, and Pakistan (a longtime friend of China’s) a mere 5 percent.”\(^{40}\) The results visualize affiliations in the region especially in relation to cooperation with the US. The results of the research prove that there are differing perceptions of China in Asia, connected with national interests, history and also geography.

The comprehensive approach to force build-up has an important impact on other entities in the region. One consequences is an arms race and investment in modern technologies to enhance the deterrence effect against possible future ambitions of opponents. Such military developments and a growing assertiveness in the region influences smaller nations’ foreign policy, as they need to decide what policy to select: to balance or follow when facing a threat. One effect is the desire to enter into coalition with other players as is the case with Japan, Australia, and South Korea, and lately the Philippines as their main ally is the USA. Furthermore, other nations are trying to enhance their security using such an approach. Taking into account the geo-strategy of the Asian continent, it can be observed that the respective armed forces especially the navy and air force as strategic components of military doctrines, are becoming subject to modernization, as they provide more and more needed force projection capabilities. They provide the necessary tools for costal nations to build anti-access and area denial capabilities. It is directly related to the importance of oceans and seas for the continent along with vast land territories, difficult and differing landscapes. Extending maritime reach and developing modern capabilities will continue, so that nations will to be ready to face threats in an oceanic domain.

\(^{38}\) The role of sea lines of communications is also outlined in: Z. Śliwa, China’s Strategic Growth Sustainability: Accidental Leader?, Connections, The Partnership for Peace Consortium (PPC), Fall 2010, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany 2010, p. 17-35.


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