

ASIA PROGRAM

**THE ROLE OF ACCESS-DENIAL IN COERCIVE
DIPLOMACY, THE DIALECTIC OF INTERDICTION
FOR AREA CONTROL IN ASIA**

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The present article discusses the challenges caused by the anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) systems, a set of military capabilities and actions that could be used for either preventing a military force from entering an area of crisis (anti-access) or degrading its freedom of movement within an operational theatre (area-denial). Along with the past findings and the current challenges that research faces, the following analysis aims at presenting A2/AD's role in the episodes of crisis where a limited use of force or a threat to use force serves as a bargaining tool to assert the political will of a state or a non-state actor. A *modus operandi* which was analyzed through the concept of coercive diplomacy.

THE CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

Since the beginning of 2000s the question of access to areas of conflict has risen as a topic of great concern among military experts in the USA. First targeted at China's rise as a military power, the range of the studies led on the subject has extended to include others emerging powers with divergent political goals such as Iran, North Korea and Russia. A specific attention has been focused on anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, which refer to the technologies and actions that could be used to thwart the deployment of an expeditionary force. Official writings distinguish anti-access which are those actions and capabilities "designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area" and area-denial which aims at "limiting the freedom of action" of forces already deployed in a conflict zone¹.

As such, A2/AD covers a broad set of means ranging from strategic and pre-strategic weapons (nuclear, electromagnetic pulse, or cyberwarfare), to conventional (mines, anti-aerial systems) and non-conventional capabilities (clandestine actions, special operations). The building up of these capabilities in comprehensive architectures disputing or threatening to dispute the mastery of key-elements for a deployment such as air superiority, spatial geo-intelligence, sea control and the electromagnetic

¹ *Joint Operational Access Concept*, US DoD, 2012, p. 6.

environment² is liable to deter a military power or an international coalition from intervening. Another important aspect of anti-access rests on the psychological effects produced by physical barriers (mine fields, anti-aerial systems) or the perception of the threat. Such factors are bound to influence political decisions as recent episodes of crisis showed. The takeover of Crimea in 2014 or the Grey Zone strategy in the Chinese seas illustrates this aspect as they have been implemented with a very limited use of force. But, arguably, neither could these events have occurred without the shadow and protection of powerful military systems. Elements of this complex interplay between the use of force and restraint were theorized through the concept of *Coercive Diplomacy* (or coercion, both terms are used). I shall discuss this notion in its broadest definition, the one developed by Thomas Schelling, “the threat of damage, or of more damage to come, that can make someone yield or comply”³. Along with a presentation of the concept of A2/AD, its structural features, and its current evolutions, next sections will detail further the dynamic between coercion and anti-access.

THE CURRENT SEMANTIC DEBATE

Although number of reports and articles dedicated to the topic demonstrates that the concept of A2/AD has proven to be an efficient tool in the mobilization of academic resources and experts, it faces recurrent critics regarding its perimeter and definition. Among them, the question of whether or not A2/AD is a strategy or a set of operational capabilities is often evoked. For instance, Admiral Richardson, Chief of Naval Operations of the US Navy, cast the concept’s pertinence in doubt, arguing that it describes the classical friction between defensive and offensive strategies. Others, such as Guillaume Lasconjarias, emphasize its efficiency as it contributes to framing a unified strategic perception of the threats facing Nato’s members. However, it seems difficult to explain the dynamics of anti-access without linking the specifically military issues to the broader realm of Grand Strategy where a policymaker/strategist can use all levers available (diplomatic, cultural, psychological) to reach his ultimate goal.

²Called otherwise the “Global Commons”. See in particular Frédéric RAMEL, « Access to the global commons and grand strategies : A shift in global interplay », *Etude de l’IRSEM* (2014/30).

³ Thomas SCHELLING, *Arms and Influence*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1966., p.3

Most of the recent studies related to anti-access discuss the concept in a definition encompassing political and diplomatic aspects alongside pure military aspects. For instance, Sam J. Tangredi, in a study which compiled the main findings on the subject evokes the permanent features of anti-access through the example of the Persian campaign against the Greek cities in 480 BC. Facing an overwhelmingly superior Persian army (200,000-1,000,000 troops), the Greek cities (whose forces were estimated at around 20,000 troops) coerced the Persian king Xerxes into retreating after they had destroyed his fleet in Salamis. Given the high dependency of a large army on logistics, and facing, on the one hand, the impossibility of quickly taking the Greek cities to ensure a food supply and, on the other, the potential destruction of his boats in charge of logistics on the Hellespont, Xerxes had no choice but to quit their territory. During the Cold War, Americans and Soviets both used this logic on land and sea. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, the Soviets built up a navy conceived for sea-denial (notably based around a powerful fleet of submarines) in the Barents, Okhostk, Black Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea. Its mission was to assert control over areas that could be used to disrupt western SLOCs (Sea Lanes of Communication) and also prevent in-depth strikes from the sea in the event of a conflict. On the other side, during the 1960s and 1970s NATO planned to bar Soviet submarines from access to the Atlantic Ocean by drowning them in the GIUK (the area between Greenland, Iceland and the UK) - a passage which was used during the Second World War by German submarines to reach interdiction positions in the North Atlantic.

These examples illustrate various structural features of anti-access taken in its broadest definition. First is the perception of a strategic asymmetry, which encourages the weakest power to build up a defensive interdiction strategy. Departing from this first observation, the anti-access power will strive to harness as much as possible the geographic particularities of its environment (second feature). In the Greek-Persian example, this element was illustrated during the naval battle of Salamis. Outnumbered, the Greek fleet managed to draw the Persian fleet into a narrow stretch where it could compensate for its initial disadvantage. This usage of a bottleneck helped the Greek side inflict a decisive blow to an already weakened Persian fleet (which had been damaged

by a storm during the crossing of the Aegean Sea). In addition to these elements, Tangredi emphasizes the predominance of the maritime environment, and more general features of conflicts such as the importance of intelligence and operational deceit, or the intervention of external factors (intervention of another power, or exceptional circumstances such as a storm destroying the fleet of one of the actors, for example).

MODERN ANTI-ACCESS: THE LESSONS OF THE FIRST GULF WAR

In its current definition, A2/AD was shaped by the immediate post-Cold War context. In 1990, responding to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, an American-led coalition defeated Saddam Hussein's army in a few days with minimal losses. At that time, victory was attributed to the recent implementation of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), which consisted of targeting strategic enemy nodes with surgical strikes and a network-centric organization of combat systems (C4ISR). After a first special operation led against two radar bases near the Saudi border, the coalition could destroy the numerous Iraqi air defense forces – and yet disorganized by the loss of their observation capabilities. The massive raids then led on Iraq's territory projecting more than 700 aircrafts during the first 24 hours destroyed the remainder of Iraq's air response capabilities and the main headquarters of Iraq military command⁴. First engagement for the US armed forces since the Vietnamese conflict, this first post-Cold War intervention had a striking psychological impact, making delusional the idea that some part of the world could escape the US's reach: "denial was no longer perceived as an interim step toward building the capacity of control. Following the Gulf War it was perceived as a goal in itself since control appeared impossible"⁵. But this diagnosis was not thoroughly shared in China and the USSR (living its last months), where Saddam Hussein's defeat was analyzed by experts through the prism of his decision to not conduct preemptive attacks on the international coalition during its deployment⁶. By not acting during this phase where the coalition was the most vulnerable, Saddam Hussein's armies allowed the US war-machine to freely build up its logistical lanes and deploy the whole panoply

⁴ see Tony MORIN, « "We simply have to destroy the Iraqi air defense system". La coalition face à la défense antiaérienne irakienne », *Défense et Sécurité Internationale* (2017/HS56), pp. 58-61.

⁵ SAM TANGREDI, *Anti-Access Warfare, Countering A2/AD Strategies*, op. cit., p. 23.

⁶ See Benjamin S LAMBETH, *Desert Storm and its Meaning. The View from Moscow, Project Air Force*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 1992, p. 93.

of its capabilities. Capabilities against which they were powerless (it is, notably, the first military engagement in which stealth bombers and Precision Guided Munitions were massively used). However, aware that a stronger force could oppose access to operational theaters in the wars to come, the US Defense Science Board (DSB) first evoked anti-access in 1996, and the A2/AD concept gained popularity in the early 2000s in the context of an increasing number of American interventions⁷. This concern was well summed up in a CSBA report issued after the second US intervention in Iraq (2003)⁸: “having seen Iraq routed twice by US-led coalition forces after they were allowed to deploy unmolested into Southwest Asia, [future adversaries] will seek asymmetric ways of opposing the movement of US military forces into their region”⁹ (extract from a CSBA report to the US Congress).

THE CHINESE STRATEGY - TWO CLOSELY LINKED NOTIONS: ANTI-ACCESS AND COERCION

Reflecting these concerns, a Chinese source-based study published by the RAND Corporation in 2007¹⁰ investigated the Chinese conception of anti-access. It compiled various analyses from Chinese authors written in military periodicals and reports between the end of the 1980s and the early 2000s. Even if terms such as “anti-access” are not directly employed, the content of the debate is close to A2/AD as it would be depicted in further theoretical writings. Notably because it would explore A2/AD’s main features: anticipation of what a context of strategic asymmetry would imply in terms of operational rhythm and intensity, assessing the impact of distances in the region’s geostrategy, and finally, thinking about what operational deceit would consist of in a time where satellites make it difficult to hide military moves.

⁷The A2/AD though would be first enunciated by A. Keprinevitch in Andrew KEPRINEVITCH, Andrew WATTS, Robert WORK, *Meeting the Anti-Access and Area-Denial Challenge* [online], Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, Washington, 2003, URL: <<http://csbaonline.org/uploads/documents/2003.05.20-Anti-Access-Area-Denial-A2-AD.pdf>>.

⁹ Andrew KEPRINEVITCH, *et al.*, *Meeting the Anti-Access and Area-Denial Challenge* [online], *op. cit.*, p. 93.

¹⁰ ROGER CLIFF, [ET AL.], *Entering the Dragon’s Lair: Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2007.

Chinese experts' analysis departs from the assumption made at the end of the Cold War that “new contingencies would be “local, limited wars”” with an objective to “assert one standpoint and will through limited military action”¹¹, not total annihilation. During the first Gulf War, Chinese officers could observe the efficiency of the US RMA. The study reveals that after this conflict, Chinese internal debate became increasingly focused on topics such as missile campaigns, defensive information warfare, air defense, and operational deceit. From these themes, two ideas are clearly stressed: first, that future campaigns would be short in duration as such, the initial moments of a conflict would be decisive; and second, they would rest on the combination of military, diplomatic, and economic coercive means. In addition, the significant role given to airpower in Iraq and, generally speaking, the decisive character of technological improvements in the RMA affected the perception within the PLA (People’s Liberation Army) that great efforts had to be made in terms of equipment. This observation underlaid the direction given by Jiang Zemin in 1993 to prepare the PLA for “high-technology local wars”. Behind this term laid the main features of the RMA as it was implemented by the US, such as the critical aspect of informatized networked combat systems and their build up in C4ISR architectures. The twin objective of acquiring these systems and being able to destroy this capacity in an enemy’s system is at the core of the Chinese analysis.

As a result, in the initial phase of war, Chinese forces would strive to quickly disrupt all of an enemy’s means of communication, making the adversary ““blind,” “deaf,” and “paralyzed”” (terms used in Chinese writings). This first step could be achieved by strikes (kinetic and non-kinetic¹²) on regional enemy bases and blockades by the use of its ballistic missiles network and submarines forces. C4ISR systems would be targeted in priority, Anti-Satellite (ASAT) weapons could also be used to blind their observation capabilities. This first step is designated in strategic writings as ‘the battle for informational superiority’.¹³ A second aspect of this global approach is a comprehensive strategy drawing on the political and psychological effects of military actions. Indeed, although Chinese writers are conscious of the great asymmetry, technologically

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹³ By informational the reader will understand the systems of communication, observation, coordination and guidance of military platforms

speaking, between the US and China they foresee that with a sufficiently deteriorated situation at the beginning of the confrontation, China's military could deter an American intervention (for instance in Taiwan's strait).

As such, a great part of their success would lay on their ability to strike the minds of American people and leaders by inflicting a first decisive, traumatic blow. To achieve that, they would rely on the combination of surprise and a concentration of their best capabilities and weapons on the destruction of various strategic points. These focus points include, as explained above, informational systems (the blinding maneuver) and US bases in Asia.

This element is probably the most important since it is the most likely to disrupt any intervention. In all its previous interventions, Chinese analysts noted a high US reliance on their alliance network. Some of them propose using diplomacy or coercion on US allies to encourage their neutrality during the conflict or even the closing of their territories to US forces. One other solution could be to neutralize these bases by employing kinetic means (covert action, missiles...) or non-kinetic ones (cyberattacks, electronic warfare). With unusable bases (or access-denial by their allies), combined with the first casualties, some authors anticipate that the political opposition to war in the USA could be strong enough to discourage any further escalation.

THE CURRENT DEBATE REGARDING A2/AD AND COUNTER-STRATEGIES ENVISIONED

In the aftermath of this report, numerous studies and reports attempted to theorize a counter-strategy. Even though, evoking all of them would be difficult in the context of this article, among the main contributions let us quote the concept of AirSea Battle (ASB), first evoked in 2009 on the previous example of Airland battle,¹⁴ which aims at developing synergies between the Navy and the US Air Force, or the Joint Operational Access Concept (2012), which officially stresses the operational goals and broad trends of a counter-anti-access concept. Other documents such as Forcible Joint Entry (2012), Joint Interdiction (2016) were other attempts to delineate a strategic doctrine with a

¹⁴ A concept developed in order to counter the local asymmetry that western forces were facing against the USSR in Europe in the 1980s

specific focus on offensive (Forcible Entry), and defensive strategies (Joint Interdiction). Overall, these documents depart from the same observation: that the increasing range of ballistic missiles, the proliferation of anti-aircraft systems (the Russian S-400 SAM system being the reference point), mine warfare and other A2/AD systems imply a revision of US strategy and a repositioning of their military assets. This aspect is particularly salient regarding the geostrategic context in Asia, where China, thanks to a rapid growth of its military budget, modernized its Navy and its Rocket Force (formerly Second Artillery). Recently acquired weapons such as the DF21D (the so called ‘carrier killer’), or newcomers like the DF26 (with an estimated range of 3200km), and the modernization of the submarine force (thanks to the acquisition of Russian Kilos and SSN) underlie the observation formulated by the specialist Yves Heng-Lim,¹⁵ that striking US bases in the Asian region was being made less attractive by China’s new capabilities, since they now have the power to strike any US forces on their way in the Pacific Ocean. Other authors estimate that the coverage offered by A2/AD umbrellas (redundant systems of anti-aircraft weapons, ballistic missiles, and anti-ship land-based systems) would already be able to shoot a target within 600kms from the Chinese shores. If true, this would shift the area of the first island chain into a *de facto* Chinese lake in the event of a conflict¹⁶. Accordingly, AirSea Battle focuses on neutralizing these interdiction capabilities with, in addition, a more precise analysis targeted on SEAD (Suppression of Air Defenses), preemptive strikes on the enemy’s long-range strike forces and the resilience of US deployment platforms. It also inverts the principle of a “blinding maneuver” as the initial step of conflict.

Numerous observers and military figures have criticized ASB for being evasive about its ability to respond in a scalable way to a military threat. One major objection is that by assuming that a future conflict would first materialize with preemptive strikes and “blinding maneuvers”, this concept implies a direct full-scale war. According to various sources, such scenario would be likely to look like a long “trench warfare”, since both

¹⁵ Yves-Heng LIM, « Expanding the Dragon’s Reach: The Rise of China’s Anti-access Naval Doctrine and Forces », *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2016).

¹⁶ See Andrew Erickson’s estimation of the PLA’s range in Andrew ERICKSON, Evan MONTGOMERY, Craig NEUMAN, *et al.*, « Correspondence: How Good Are China’s Anti-access/Area-Denial Capabilities? », *International Security* 41 (2017/4), pp. 202-213. in Joseph HENROTIN, « La maturation de la marine chinoise, un exemple d’A2/AD », *Défense et Sécurité Internationale* (2017/HS56).

participants would be able to oppose the other's freedom of action, "inflicting huge losses on both sides" and with, at the end, potentially no winner¹⁷. Such an uncertainty, combined with the traditional arguments regarding a conflict between nuclear powers would constitute a great deterrent factor for policymakers. In addition, it contradicts one core principle of the current Gray Zone strategies observed in the Chinese seas and the Ukraine where state-actors, on the contrary, strove to avoid direct confrontation.

On the other hand, Offshore Control (2012)¹⁸, another concept, stresses the necessity of fighting at another level than the Asian theatre. Since the extreme concentration of the improving Chinese capabilities makes it difficult to envision a conflict with its armed forces, one must reverse the terms of the equation by initiating a global seizing or destruction of its commercial assets abroad (ships and so on), and leave the Chinese economy to suffocate until it complies. Given the constant reduction in size of the international commercial fleet (post-panamax standard ships), the author T. Hammes expects it to concern roughly a thousand ships¹⁹, which is feasible in a short amount of time for a global navy like the US. Secondly, he observes that one of the major unknown factors in the scenarios envisioned by the promoters of AirSea battle is that nobody knows what would happen after the first phase of a conflict (the "blinding maneuvers"). Given the high dependency of the current combat systems on Geospatial intelligence (and GPS) and computers, a war in these respective domains could greatly disturb operational access²⁰. This uncertainty itself is likely to discourage political calls for escalation. In this context, a distant blockade, as proposed in the Offshore Control concept, would require either military or civilian means that could escape the reach of most of A2/AD capabilities (notably in cyberspace, and anti-satellite weapons). Furthermore, the ship seizing could be realized were the GPS to be destroyed.

This strategy, if clearly formulated, could be persuasive enough to deter any brutal approach in the Taiwanese context, especially since it can be employed with less risks to

¹⁷ Steven STASHWICK, « A New War in the Pacific Could be 'Trench Warfare' at Sea » [online], *The Diplomat*, august 2016, URL: <<https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/a-new-war-in-the-pacific-could-be-trench-warfare-at-sea/>>.

¹⁸ T HAMMES, *Offshore Control: A Proposed Strategy for an Unlikely Conflict* [online], Institute for National Strategic Studies, 2012, URL: <<http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-278.pdf>>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰ An analysis shared with Corentin Brustlein, director at IFRI, who estimates that "the western modern war model rely so heavily on informational flux that disturb them has become a priority for the Russian and Chinese armed forces." [translated from French] in « Entrée en premier et A2/AD. Quels Défis pour la France ? », *Défense et Sécurité Internationale* (2017/HS56), pp. 46-50. p. 50

triggering a nuclear escalation or great human sacrifices. Although preliminary studies demonstrated that, after a year of conflict, China would suffer more from the collapse of its exterior commercial trade than the US (a 10% decrease of its GDP is predicted compared with 7% for the US)²¹, strategy is a dynamic dialectic and plans never resist the first shock with an adversary (as many strategists like to remind). In that respect, the impact of potential retaliation measures from China should be assessed as well as the political ability of the US to mobilize its allies and circumstantial partners who might have China as first economic client in the medium-long term.

THE CURRENT DEBATE REGARDING A2/AD AND COUNTER-STRATEGIES ENVISIONED

Although, the building-up of complete A2/AD architectures will take time and be constantly challenged by the development of new technologies (hypersonic missiles, mine warfare among numerous others) existing systems can “already be used by states with limited revisionist agendas [...] to keep at bay outside powers and coercing or intimidating their near-abroad”²². As such, one part of the new strategic competition will rest on the technologic race between the different actors involved, another already initiated will depend on their ability to skillfully coordinate the use of strength and diplomacy.

On the technological ground, in the US, the Third Offset Strategy announced in 2014 is set to help negotiating the delicate turn between an overwhelming technologic superiority and an almost parity between the US and its competitors. Its core objective is to keep comparative advantages in all or almost all of the sectors. Initial announcements evoked the development of *human-machine teaming* technologies, directed energy weapons, hypervelocity and drones (including submarine drones)²³.

Another factor of the future competition rests on the actor’s ability to harness or fight what is traditionally called the Gray Zone strategy²⁴. In this context, military action is

²¹ David GOMPERT, Astrid SUTH CEVALOS, Cristina GARAFOLA, *War with China: Thinking Through the Unthinkable* [online], RAND Corporation, available on <https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1140.html>, 105 pages.

²² Octavian MANEA, George VISAN, Armand GOSU, *et al.*, *Black Sea in Access-Denial Age*, Romania Energy Center, 2016.p.5

²³ See Pierre GROS, « La Third Offset Strategy américaine », *Défense et Industrie* (2016/7), pp. 17-19.

²⁴ Otherwise called Hybrid warfare or non-linear strategy

one part of a broader strategy mixing all capabilities of the state. A practical analysis of this aspect can be found in Dmitry Adamsky's concept of "cross-domain coercion". In his depiction of the Russian strategic thought and the concept of New Generation Warfare, military capabilities intervene as a tool of coercive influence acting essentially to prevent the escalation of a conflict or deter a foreign intervention. Along with "nuclear manipulation, [the military apparatus] creates a *cordon sanitaire* that enables immune maneuver space, a sphere of the possible, within which other forms of influence can achieve tangible results with, or preferably without the use of force"²⁵. Such role, for instance, was epitomized by Russia's decision to use in Syria dual technologies²⁶, namely long-range missiles (Kalibr) and nuclear bombers such as TU-22M3²⁷ - "two types of strategic aviation on three whereas there was no tactical need"²⁸. An unnecessary use which sends a peculiar strategic signal²⁹ that could have stoked the feeling that, for example, Syria was placed under Russia's nuclear umbrella. In spite of this fundamental role of the military which consists of sending veiled and more direct threats, in the NGW, the aggressive power strives to avoid any direct use of force against its adversary except through clandestine means (contractors, cyber operators, special operation forces). Indeed, the core-principle of this modus operandi is to obtain a shift of the strategic behavior of the adversary. As such, the first war goal is to "break the internal coherence of the enemy system" through a series of actions made for "discrediting the leadership and armed forces, deceit the victim and demoralize the population"³⁰. During and after the crisis in Crimea, this aspect was embodied by number of fake news targeting particularly the NATO warships deployed in the Black Sea. For instance, a Russian fighter aircraft SU-24 was said to have neutralized with an electronic warfare pod one of US most recent defensive naval system (AEGIS)³¹. Other type of fake news targeted the Ukrainian population or aimed at mobilizing the public opinion in Russia in favour of the conflict by showing pictures of massacres or prisoners camps. Pictures which were later

²⁵ Dmitry ADAMSKY, « Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy », *Proliferation Papers* (2015/54), p. 37.

²⁶ Weapons usually used for nuclear deterrence but armed with conventional payloads

²⁷ « Russian Strategic Bombers Launch Strike on Daesh Targets in Syria's Deir ez-Zor » [online], *Sputnik News*, le 1st november 2017, URL: <<https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201711011058723441-russia-bombers-syria-strike/>>.

²⁸ *La pensée stratégique Russe: changements et continuité*, [online], vol. 2, Paris I - Sorbonne, 2017. URL: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=il4fD89gsOI&t=58s>>.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Dmitry ADAMSKY, « Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy », *Proliferation Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

³¹ Octavian MANEA, *et al.*, *Black Sea in Access-Denial Age*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

proven to have been taken during other conflicts (Syria, Bosnia).³² Such elements emphasize Adamsky's conclusion that cultural, political, ideological fight along with the use of special forces "will sift the battle into cognitive or psychological spheres".³³

CONCLUSION

The global strategic context is becoming increasingly complicated by the growing number and density of A2/AD systems in various regions (Persian Gulf, Far East, Eastern Europe, Syria). This article aimed at analyzing that, as a game-changer, A2/AD capabilities are not only a cause of concern regarding potential conflicts, but that they are also liable to offer greater influence in current standoffs to states driven, in some cases, by powerful irredentist motives.

Access-denial plays a role in what increasingly appears as the return of the game of the Great Powers offering, for instance, an instrument of bargaining to Russia in the settlement of the Syrian conflict or the ability to draw a red line in Ukraine's emancipation process by safeguarding its strategic asset on the Black Sea (its base of Sebastopol). Such elements cannot be analyzed without the more global understanding offered by a Coercion principle, "master of ceremonies"³⁴, that is to say this ability to coordinate, in the age of complex interdependence and persistent nuclear threat, the military strategy with economic and informational coercive measures. The fear expressed by authoritarian regimes for regime change, illustrate this challenge of the control of information in the age of global social networks and free movement of information. Access-denial aims at controlling spaces by building sophisticated fortresses, or "by cultivating the fear in the mind of the aggressor that he will have to bear a degree of pain that exceeds whatever gains he hoped to achieve by taking the offensive"³⁵. ■

³² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³³ Dmitry ADAMSKY, « Cross-Domain Coercion: The Current Russian Art of Strategy », *Proliferation Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁵ Wess Mitchell in Octavian MANEA, *et al.*, *Black Sea in Access-Denial Age*, *op. cit.*, p.29

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