



**Robert Haddick.** *Fire on Water: China, America, and the Future of the Pacific.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 288 pp. \$37.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-61251-795-7.

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The relationship between the United States and China continues to be a critical, if not the most important, relationship in the Asia-Pacific region. Robert Haddick, in his book *Fire on the Water*, provides an interesting perspective on US strategic considerations for China in an attempt to reestablish a balance favorable to the United States. These considerations, not inconsistent with current objectives in the region, include preserving the rule of law, continuing the existence of the open commons, and respecting sovereignty in the region. Within this context, Haddick argues that the United States should focus on dissuading China from employing its formidable military potential, either directly or indirectly, in an attempt to change the international system in ways that could substantially diminish the sovereignty and benefits enjoyed by the United States and partners in the region.

But how should this be accomplished? Haddick proposes a “dissuasive and cost imposing” approach that forms the basis of the US strategy. This approach would address four purposes: increase the political and diplomatic costs to China for its continued “salami slicing” in the East and South China Seas, impose costs and deny China rewards from any successes based on expansion or intimidation of its neighbors, dissuade China away from assertive policies by holding at risk assets

and conditions valued by China’s leadership, and reduce the value of China’s military modernization by instituting US and coalition defense reforms that negate China’s current military strategy in the region. While Haddick has postulated a broad strategy, his book mainly focuses on the fourth recommendation of addressing US and partner nation defense reforms.

These reforms are primarily focused on airpower and naval (including US Marine Corps) reforms. For airpower the recommendations include: development of a long-range strategic bomber to support deep strikes, development of autonomous missiles to counter China’s mobile missile forces and dispersed and protected airpower, and improvement of reconnaissance and communications technologies and capabilities given the current vulnerability of US systems. For naval systems, the recommendations include: moving away from an emphasis on carrier and guided missile surface combatant forces due to their increasing vulnerability, focusing on long-range strike capability comparable to those investments made for airpower (both aircraft and missiles), increasing leverage of the US submarine fleet to ensure sea denial in the waters adjacent to China, and increasing integration of the US Marine Corps with regional countries to shape the security environment “left of boom.” These aforemen-

tioned airpower and naval improvements would also apply as appropriate to our allies and partners in the region.

So how did Haddick reach these conclusions? In the first two chapters, he provides some historical context within the region, and concludes that a maintained forward presence by the United States is the least risky and least costly alternative among the four potential approaches. The challenge, unfortunately, is that the United States and its allies need to make major changes to how they organize, train, and equip (OT&E), and subsequently, deploy their forces in the region. As stated, Haddick believes the most important role for these military forces will be to deter conflict by compelling potential adversaries to conclude that they would lose if they used force against US interests. Unfortunately, China's military modernization efforts call into question the sustainment of this deterrence given the current and planned US military force structure in the region.

So how did the United States get to this position? Haddick summarizes that military doctrine, long-ingrained service cultures, and defense acquisition practices have resulted in US military forces that are "far too heavily weighted towards short-range weapons systems unsuited for the vast operational distances in East Asia" (p. 53). US bases in the Asia-Pacific region are concentrated in two major countries, Korea and Japan (homeland islands), with additional forces deployed in Okinawa and Guam, and most recently to Australia and the Philippines (temporary basis). This basing, however, is still predominately concentrated in Northeast Asia, and will most likely not exhibit sufficient flexibility to support all conflicts in the region. In addition, these concentrated bases are very vulnerable to attack. Exacerbating this basing issue are service cultures that have not evolved sufficiently given China's threat in the region, which is composed of significant force capability against military targets and warships thousands of kilometers from its mainland. The air

force continues to be centric on the "fighter-superiority" mission, with development of highly capable but short-ranged platforms at the expense of long-range strike aircraft. Naval forces still emphasize the central role of the aircraft carrier and the supporting Carrier Strike Groups (CSG), which continue to remain vulnerable to China's increasing investment in Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles (ASBMs) and Anti-Ship Cruise Missiles (ASCMs). In addition, navy and marine corps aircraft are short-range as well. Unfortunately the army does not provide a sufficient long-range strike capability via battlefield or theater ballistic missiles. To compound these challenges, acquisition of new systems is not as responsive as it should be given service culture "traditions" as well as challenges in changing and reprioritizing the defense industrial base.

So what is China's military modernization approach and how does that highlight the shortfalls described in the previous paragraph? Haddick describes how China intends to defend its interests from the land, via significant development in anti-access and area denial (A2/AD) capability (China refers to this as "active defense" or "counter-intervention"). China will use these capabilities to achieve control of the seas adjacent to its shores. Haddick postulates that it will be easier for China to develop A2/AD missiles than it will be for the United States to develop survivable platforms and missile defenses. China's land attack missile forces most likely can shut down or severely suppress the sortie generation rates from the primary US bases in the region. In addition, modern Chinese aircraft have combat radii at least 35 percent greater (1500 kilometers versus 1100 kilometers average) than US aircraft. Also, Chinese ASBMs and ASCMs provide significant reach into surrounding seas, with the ASCMs being launched from aircraft, submarines, and surface combatants. To support the intelligence, targeting, and command requirements for these military capabilities, China is significantly investing in reconnaissance and global navigation satellite constella-

tions. This is not to say that Chinese military strategy, doctrine, and technical capability makes them a current peer of the United States; nevertheless, the Chinese military is expanding and improving rapidly. They have also discerned notable shortcomings in US military capability, in spite of the fact that US forces remain more advanced, experienced, and capable in the aggregate.

So where has the United States stumbled in a response to this military modernization and buildup? Haddick next goes into detail about US strategic development in this Asia-Pacific region. Starting in 2012, the United States developed the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC), which built off and embedded the predecessor Air-Sea Battle. Unfortunately, the Air-Sea Battle concept focused on three lines of effort—disrupting adversary sensors and command, destroying an enemy’s missile-launching platforms, and defeating those missiles in flight—which are increasingly impossible tasks given the capabilities that China exhibits. In fact, these concepts focus expensive US and partner military efforts at China’s strengths instead of their vulnerabilities. A third option is proposed, and that is a distant blockade; this approach also suffers from executability concerns in that the US military is neither equipped nor organized to execute such a strategy. So all three options do not really address a theory of success, which brings us back to the US strategy laid out in the second paragraph.

From Haddick’s perspective, there is one critical component to ensure success that is not emphasized sufficiently with today’s strategy. That component is improved integration with our partners and allies in the region. There are seven areas that regional allies and partners could contribute to the US strategy: they could continue to promote legal cases against China’s territorial assertions, they could match Chinese maritime presence in the East and South China Seas, they could improve their respective information operations and messaging to the global audience, the United

States should expand and deepen its partnership network across Asia, the United States should lead an effort to build up basic maritime domain awareness and information sharing among its partnership network, these allies and partners should build up organic A2/AD capabilities, and in conjunction with the United States they should prepare for irregular warfare (acknowledging this is controversial and should be employed only after very careful consideration). Nevertheless, there are challenges with this increased security cooperation. First is that the services will need to expand into new roles vis-à-vis their partners. Second, partner nations may want to limit the “visibility” these initiatives have, in order to avoid the perception that they are merely “auxiliaries” for the United States or to avoid getting into a conflict not connected to their interests. There is also the concern on US staying power in the region that would jeopardize any security architecture initiatives. Lastly, there is a concern that an improved security network could actually reward excessively aggressive behavior by partners assuming US support. From Haddick’s perspective, the United States can mitigate this by maintaining a modest profile, organize multilateral versus bilateral training exercises, leverage exercises for political signaling, consider designs to negate the conflicting dilemma of “entanglement and abandonment,” and remain sensitive to legitimate Chinese security considerations (p. 157).

With all this, Haddick is concerned that China’s military modernization has created a “period of danger” for US and allied interests starting in 2020, as any planned or potential US responses to this modernization will not be fielded until significantly later (p. 216). In the meantime, the United States and its allies need to continue to focus on preserving regional security while maintaining the existing rules-based international order. The United States needs to fully leverage the allies and partners in the region, but more importantly develop a credible deterrence capability to hold China’s most valuable targets at risk. This

would primarily involve military improvements to develop a long-range strike capability, supported by autonomous missiles and improved reconnaissance and communications technologies. This is not to say the military option should outweigh other diplomatic and economic initiatives, but without changed investments in US military force structure, the United States will not be able to provide a credible deterrent in the future to Chinese actions in the region. However, the United States will have to make some important choices, by first recognizing there is an issue, then allocating sufficient resources to the region, as well as overcoming existing bureaucratic and institutional interests that would hamper initiatives.

In summary, Haddick provides an important discussion on US military deterrence options for a rising China in the Asia-Pacific region. While he discusses non-military options, his focus is on military deterrence and reasons why the United States needs to make the strategic decisions to bring these capabilities to fruition. The challenge with Haddick's overall perspective is that diplomatic and economic factors are also extremely relevant to any overall discussion of US strategies in the Asia-Pacific region. Haddick does acknowledge these factors, and the factors are incorporated into his overall recommendations; nevertheless, without full treatment of these factors in this book, readers are required to access other sources to fully understand how his military recommendations would complement any proposed diplomatic or economic strategies.

From the military aspect, in the few years since publication of this book, the Department of Defense (DOD) has renewed focus on new concepts (i.e., Third Offset Strategy), as well as acquisition improvement initiatives, to address some of the shortcomings identified by Haddick.[1] I will acknowledge that these recent DOD efforts are not the panacea to the issues outlined by Haddick, but they are a critical step in the right direction. Also, while China's military continues to grow, there are

still significant challenges the People's Liberation Army (PLA) faces across their modernization efforts, including organizational restructure, doctrine development, and improved Command and Control (C2) capabilities.[2] These challenges should temper any detailed review and assessment of China's evolving military capabilities.

Overall, this book is highly recommended for any comprehensive discussion on US strategic challenges in the Asia-Pacific region vis-à-vis a rising China, with specific emphasis on military challenges the United States needs to address quickly. Otherwise, the United States has the potential to become overwhelmed by growing Chinese military capability which will restrict viable US options in the future to counter China's expanding influence in the Asia-Pacific region.

#### Notes

[1]. Cheryl Pellerin, "Deputy Secretary: Third Offset Strategy Bolsters America's Military Deterrence," *Department of Defense News* (Washington, DC, October 31, 2016), <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/991434/deputy-secretary-third-offset-strategy-bolsters-americas-military-deterrence/>. The Pentagon's Third Offset Strategy pursues next-generation technologies and concepts to assure US military superiority, but the real focus is strengthening US conventional deterrence to make sure wars do not happen.

[2]. Department of Defense, "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2016," Annual Report to Congress (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, April 26, 2016), <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2016%20China%20Military%20Power%20Report.pdf>.

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