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Beyond Air-Sea Battle: The Debate over US Military Strategy in Asia, by Aaron L. Friedberg

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President Cheney and his influence in the Bush administration during the Six Party Talks. “The neoconservatives, aided by a vice president’s office deep with suspicions of the Foreign Service, seem to believe that the State Department negotiated with the North Koreans because we enjoyed it. Our effort to explain . . . fell on deaf ears.” Despite Hill’s best efforts, the North Koreans decided not to comply with American demands, and he was soon brought back home.

After a short respite, Hill was selected to replace Ambassador Ryan Crocker in Iraq. He makes many valuable observations about his tour in Iraq, especially his strained relations with the U.S. military leadership responsible for the region, in particular Generals David Petraeus and Ray Odierno. His criticism is also directed at the Obama administration, which he perceived as slow “to grasp the complexities of the region, the seeming confusion within its foreign policy team between wars of democracy and sectarian enmity.”

Outpost: Life on the Frontlines of American Diplomacy is a significant contribution to the international studies field and is a must-read. This volume will appeal to anyone who is interested in learning more about the Department of State or the intricacies of American interagency relationships. However, with all the security challenges facing the United States in the foreseeable future, this book also needs to be read by midgrade and senior military professionals so they may gain a better appreciation of the Foreign Service and the people who serve in that important institution.

T. J. JOHNSON



Friedberg, Aaron L. *Beyond Air-Sea Battle: The Debate over US Military Strategy in Asia*. London: Routledge, 2014. 152pp. \$14.99

Normally, a recommendation regarding for which audience a book is best suited comes at the end of the review. In this case, it comes first because Professor Aaron Friedberg provides a tight monograph that illuminates areas of great misunderstanding to a large population in the policy and defense communities: the debate over the concept of Air-Sea Battle (ASB) and the vernacular of modern maritime strategy. Landlubbers who have been engrossed for the last fourteen years in land wars in South Asia should read this book. As a history professor teaching a population composed predominantly of U.S. Army majors at the Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, this reviewer has firsthand experience of this shortfall in knowledge in both uniformed and civilian defense personnel. The book is also recommended to all those who desire a comprehensive discussion of the concept and its variations, alternatives, and origins.

Friedberg, a professor of politics and international relations at Princeton University, made a compelling case in a January 2015 *Washington Quarterly* article about the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC’s) “new assertiveness,” which, he argues in this book, is the primary motivator for the emergence of ASB. From this and his other writings, he clearly believes that a response to this assertiveness is absolutely necessary, if not overdue, and in need of high-profile public debate.

The monograph is organized into an introduction, four thematic chapters, and a concluding chapter, all in about 150 pages of nicely spaced text—making it a comparatively short read, although not a simple one. Friedberg first lays out how ASB came to be and how the concept is defined. Like everyone else, he traces the origins of ASB to the challenge presented by the PRC's *adoption* of a maritime strategy that includes antiaccess/area-denial (A2/AD), although when ASB emerged it was generically framed and could have referred to other countries, including Iran (see for example this reviewer's "Air-Sea Battle and Its Discontents," *USNI Proceedings*, October 2013). A2/AD involved the expansion of the capabilities of the People's Liberation Army Navy after the Taiwan crisis of 1996 to deny use of the maritime commons inside the so-called first island chain and to challenge approaches to that area (p. 26).

Geographically, the first island chain extends from the Japanese archipelago, through Taiwan and the Philippines, to the exit of the South China Sea (SCS) at the Malacca Strait near Singapore. China began increasing its surface and subsurface fleets and its ability to project air power from land bases into this region, as well as using innovative new weapons such as antiship ballistic missiles to threaten U.S. high-value units such as aircraft carriers, amphibious assault ships, and logistics vessels beyond the first island chain. Additionally, as A2/AD developed it came to represent a "credible threat," according to Friedberg, to the naval and air bases and logistics support by U.S. allies along the first island chain (pp. 27–28). Friedberg describes this all in detail in the introduction and first chapter.

His second chapter then argues that the United States responded belatedly to A2/AD because of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the 2008 financial crisis and great recession. The former distracted U.S. policy makers from the emerging threat, and the latter prevented a strong response, because of the perceived costs in a dismal fiscal environment. Evidently he believes the current fiscal environment has eased enough to take the challenge more seriously. Here Friedberg could have supported his argument by emphasizing that, in addition to the economic crisis at home, the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were consuming inordinate U.S. resources in 2008. Nonetheless, he does a credible job of debunking those critics of ASB who say the A2/AD threat is overstated or that the relationship between the United States and China has improved enough to obviate a response.

Friedberg then outlines in chapter 3 what can be called the classical ASB concept, calling it the "direct approach." This approach is primarily offensive, although it does not posit a U.S. "first strike" but rather a reactive counteroffensive that threatens the PRC's land-based power projection and naval support to A2/AD with commensurate U.S. naval and air power, preferably in concert with allies such as Japan. He addresses critics by examining ASB's efficacy in the following areas (using speculative analysis in some cases): military outcomes, political outcomes, escalation (including nuclear), deterrence value, reassurance to allies, and the effects on competition between the United States and the PRC. Friedberg's inclusion of nuclear escalatory calculus is a welcome component, given how little this topic seems to be factored into policy discussions in

the multipolar nuclear world we now inhabit. The Department of Defense has an Air-Sea Battle Office, as does the U.S. Navy, and his discussion at the end of chapter 3 is aimed, presumably, at the folks inhabiting those organizations and their strategic masters.

Friedberg forecasts two potential ASB approaches: a “linear” approach that uses existing resources and technology and, in contrast, a “discontinuous” approach that relies heavily on new technologies and un-fielded weapons concepts (pp. 95–98). Friedberg seems to prefer the linear approach, given the ease with which it can be implemented (although that ease does not mean it will be inexpensive), but he does not rule out investigating new technologies. He is obviously wary of “betting the farm” on a “futures” approach.

In his final chapter, Friedberg describes two indirect approaches or “alternatives” to ASB: either a distant blockade or what he calls “maritime denial” (pp. 104, 116–17). He again applies an analytic framework to assess the efficacy of these less-offensive-oriented approaches. Distant blockade is merely economic warfare. It would aim at Chinese shipping, principally oil tankers at the key straits’ entrances leading through the SCS to Chinese ports. Maritime denial is simply ASB limited primarily to the global commons and PRC littoral inside the first island chain. One might characterize maritime denial as an active defense of the global commons, but again it is reactive, not something to implement without significant Chinese military provocation. The conclusion reviews the bidding on everything discussed. Here Friedberg comes across as a bit more bellicose than one might expect, implying that a mix

of all three approaches—ASB, distant blockade, and maritime denial—would probably be the best course of action. Friedberg comes closest to the nub of the issue when he writes: “The first dividing line in the debate over this issue is between the advocates of maritime denial, who seek to avoid strikes against targets on the Chinese mainland, and the proponents of ASB, who believe that war cannot be won without such attacks” (p. 137). However, he leaves the door open for the reader to make up his or her own mind on the issue.

While this might be perceived as strength, it is also something of a disappointment, because this reviewer wanted to know what Friedberg *really* recommends. Friedberg is clearly not of the opinion that ASB should be dismissed, and seems to support a course of action that implies the direct approach option while being ready, at a moment’s notice, to implement the other two approaches in response to a PRC “first strike” (p. 37).

Friedberg leverages all the latest writing on the topic, using the work of writers familiar to naval audiences such as Jan van Tol and Wayne Hughes. He has done his homework, and now it is time for all others to do theirs as the United States faces the A2/AD challenge.

JOHN T. KUEHN



Preble, Christopher, and John Mueller, eds. *A Dangerous World? Threat Perception and U.S. National Security*. Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 2014. 224pp. \$12.95

Medical doctors are trained to recognize when patients’ complaints and self-diagnoses need to be ignored, lest