

Entering the Dragon's Lair: Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States,

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professional military education on this topic. The editors are to be commended.

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Stavridis, James. *Destroyer Captain: Lessons of a First Command*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2008. 224pp. \$22.95

The politically correct aspiration for all surface warfare officers is to attain to command at sea. Realistically, these officers cannot begin to comprehend all its ramifications, but they viscerally know it is the Holy Grail. Reading Admiral Jim Stavridis's *Destroyer Captain* is about as close as these officers will come to enjoying the ride until they actually receive their orders to command. It is our great fortune that then-commander Stavridis scrupulously kept a journal during his days aboard USS *Barry* (DDG 52) (1993–95) and has offered to share his experiences with us.

James Stavridis is prolific on this subject, having written extensively on life at sea for the naval professional. Such earlier works as *Watch Officer's Guide* (editor, 1999) and *Command at Sea* (with William Mack, 1999) now serve as textbooks. *Destroyer Captain*, however, is designed to be a good read for anyone fascinated with what life is like behind the doors of the captain's cabin. Fortunately, Stavridis is a writer who is not only good with the small details of daily life but shares a sense of history and awe of the sea. Simply, he is in love with command at sea, and you feel it throughout the entire book.

Stavridis does not purport to tell new destroyer skippers that there is one correct way to succeed at their job, but he has tried to keep to the basics. The “ends” are mandated: the ship should be ready for war. The “means” is where a captain's personality turns seemingly identical structures into radically different habitats. Stavridis adheres to simplicity. Serve good food. Walk around. Have a plan. Smile.

Stavridis, currently the regional combatant commander of Southern Command, was the second skipper of *Barry*. His predecessor, today Admiral Gary Roughead, is the Chief of Naval Operations.

A particularly poignant piece is his account of the tragic death of Admiral Jay Prout, a friend and mentor and always an ebullient companion. Prout had a trademark of passing to friends en route to command a paperback about the exploits of a Royal Navy destroyer skipper who had three ships shot out from under him during the Second World War. He called that book motivation for a successful command. We can place *Destroyer Captain* on the same list.

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Cliff, Roger, et al. *Entering the Dragon's Lair: Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2007. 154pp. \$27.50

This study has already attracted widespread attention from the policy community and media, for good reason. The U.S. military appears poised to face challenges to its ability to maintain access to a variety of regional littoral

areas, such as in the Persian Gulf. It is time for American planners to view the rising antiaccess challenge as part of a global problem that may require significant restructuring of U.S. platforms, deployment, diplomacy, and even, in a worst case, strategy and tactics.

The authors have produced the first major study that evaluates comprehensively the specific antiaccess methods being discussed by Chinese military strategists. They bring to bear a wide variety of relevant doctrinal and analytic materials (many of which they themselves have translated) and explain clearly their relative authority. The authors' conclusion is sobering: in the unfortunate event of a Taiwan Strait conflict, China's military may consider launching a rapid surprise attack. Such a first strike could damage and render ineffective a wide variety of U.S. military platforms (aircraft carrier strike groups—which are described as having special vulnerabilities—and assets at regional bases). This could deny U.S. forces effective “access” to sea and air space to China's east, leaving Taiwan vulnerable to military coercion and testing American resolve. The authors term this growing zone “the Dragon's Lair.” While the United States would retain significant military forces regardless of the outcome of such a conflict, China might be able to achieve specific military and political objectives at America's expense.

An enduring challenge for analyses of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is distinguishing between aspirations and capabilities. The authors do their best to differentiate between the two, and they deserve great credit for addressing seriously a set of issues on which there has been insufficient open analysis.

While the continued lack of transparency makes it difficult to determine the PLA's precise capabilities, long-established technical expertise and focus on the development of such weapons as missiles and related technologies suggest considerable potential on China's part. The authors offer, in light of their findings, a wide variety of specific policy recommendations, which should be considered carefully. However, the expense, difficulties (largely because of inherent physics-based limitations), and side effects potentially associated with some of them—and indeed the ruinous nature of any U.S.-China conflict—make it vital to consider the larger strategic context as well.

Conflict over Taiwan is the only readily imaginable scenario in which the United States and China could have a kinetic military exchange today. This unfortunate contingency, already only a remote one, has been rendered more so by the March 2008 Taiwan election and President Ma Ying-jeou's constructive approach to cross-strait relations. Continued U.S. presence and influence in strategic regions of East Asia, which Beijing has not challenged directly in public, will remain an important subject for American policy makers, as well as for bilateral and multilateral discussion. Even as the two nations cooperate, there will undoubtedly be areas of contention. But there is no reason at this point to fear that war is imminent, and every reason to believe that each side's coercive capabilities can deter the outcome that each most fears.

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