

# How to respond to Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD)?

## Towards a NATO counter A2/AD strategy

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Rome, 20 January 2016

### CONCEPT NOTE

“Anti-access/area denial” (A2/AD) has been high on the US agenda for a couple of years, but the current threats Europe and NATO have to face make A2/AD one additional challenge to the Alliance’s security. As Russia develops options able to interdict access to nearby seas and skies in wartime, a new “Iron Curtain” is descending across the continent, from the Sea of Barents and the Arctic to the Black Sea, through the Baltic. The illegal annexation of Crimea and the increasing number of troops and advanced weapons in the port city of Kaliningrad could prevent NATO’s freedom of movement in these regions. The narrow corridor connecting Poland with Lithuania — the so-called “Suwalki gap” — appears to be the only land link between “mainland NATO members” and the Baltic States and it could, potentially, be cut off, thus challenging the Alliance’s ability to reinforce these countries, otherwise than by air or sea.

A thorough understanding of what A2/AD means does require not only to focus on the obvious military aspects and capabilities that constitute the “tip of the iceberg”. Of course, a look at weaponry and systems that would be used in denying access is critical. In addition, it calls for a comprehensive survey of NATO member states’ capabilities to maintain a strategic and technological edge, so to guarantee this access whenever and wherever it might be needed.

Ultimately, A2/AD could represent a strategy *per se*, which would combine political, diplomatic and economic elements. It aims at leveraging every mean to prevent an adversary from considering forced entry, by preventing the attacker from either bringing his operationally superior force into the contested region or freely operating within the region and maximizing his combat power. It is a game where the defender assumes the attacker will have neither the political will - nor the “stomach” - to storm in.

In the case of Russia, what is at stake is not only its will or ability to play this card, but the collective response that NATO and its member states have to pursue. In recognizing the implications of a Russian A2/AD, policymakers and practitioners have to discuss the nature of the threat, and the options available to mitigate the risks of such an outcome.

- 09.30 Welcome by Dr. **Daria Daniels Škodnik** Dean, NDC and Gen. **Vincenzo Camporini**, IAI Vice-President
- 10.00 Opening Remarks - *“Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2AD)”*: A Historical Perspective
- 10.15 **A2/AD: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?**  
*Moderator: Alessandro Marrone, IAI, Rome*  
- The Origins of the Concept: The Chinese Case Study  
- The US Military and the “Air Sea Battle” Concept
- 11.30 Coffee Break
- 11.45 **RUSSIA, ITS STRATEGY, MILITARY MODERNIZATION AND A2/AD CAPABILITIES**  
*Moderator: Dr. Guillaume Lasconjarias, NDC, Rome*  
- Russia’s Military Modernization: Where Does It Stand?  
- Does Russia have an A2/AD Strategy? What the Syrian Case tells us
- 13.00 Buffet Lunch
- 14.00 **CASE STUDIES: POSSIBLE SCENARIOS**  
*Moderator: Dr. Guillaume Lasconjarias, NDC, Rome*
- 15.15 Coffee Break
- 15.30 **NATO’S ADAPTATION TO COUNTER A2/AD: A WAY AHEAD**  
*Moderator: Alessandro Marrone, IAI, Rome*
- 16.45 **WRAP-UP PANEL: SUMMARY OF THE DAY’S FINDINGS**  
Dr. **Guillaume Lasconjarias**, NDC, Rome

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<sup>1</sup> The event was held under Chatham House rule and the speakers are not reported in this version of the agenda.