Missile Defense and East Asia

March 2001

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The first comment that a veteran of the SALT process can make with respect to missile defense and East Asia is that an action-reaction cycle is about to begin. In the 1960s it was between the US and Soviet Union. That essentially bilateral competition is still not resolved. Now in East Asia a much more complex cycle is poised. China is only the most directly influenced by the US ballistic missile defense (BMD) initiatives recently made public by the Bush administration. The SALT/START experience appears largely irrelevant, except perhaps the INF Treaty and its path-breaking onsite inspection (OSI) provisions and other confidence-building measures (CBMs) as they might apply to a missile agreement with North Korea.

Change is underway in East Asia in a very complex scene. There are two major players in the area -- China which is a nuclear-weapon state, and non-nuclear-weapon Japan with the second largest economy in the world notwithstanding its present stagnation - plus, of course, the US and Russia. Overarching, there is the US-Russia-China triangle that includes three of the five acknowledged nuclear-weapon states.

The US is pursuing a national missile defense (NMD), as well as theatre missile defenses (TMDs) for allies and US forces deployed abroad, that will directly impact East Asia when the details are announced. China is modernizing its strategic offensive nuclear missiles, but its scope and pace are unknown. Russia will continue to downsize its nuclear offensive systems because of economic weakness, but will remain a potent nuclear-weapon force. US missile defense programs will directly impact relations with both China and Russia.
There are four sets of bilateral relationships that are either unstable or could become so under certain trains of events involving BMDs. In each case, one or more of the three nuclear-weapon states are factors. First, there are two Koreas, not at peace nearly fifty years after the Korean War ended. Their common border, misnamed the de-militarized zone (DMZ), is one of the most heavily armed in the world. The US has a security treaty relationship with South Korea, but is concerned with North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. Russia and China have withdrawn their prior extensive support of North Korea, which is economically bankrupt but pivotable with respect to both peace on the Korean peninsula and relations among the three great powers.

Second, there is the one China of two parts - the mainland and Taiwan. Mainland China, an expanding economic giant, is facing enormous internal challenges, both economic and political. The US is Taiwan's most important supporter notwithstanding terminating its treaty relationship in 1979. Both a US NMD program, but particularly potential TMD assistance to Taiwan linked to US military forces, raise acute issues with mainland China.

Third, there is the age-old rivalry between Japan and China. The US provides extended nuclear deterrence to non-nuclear Japan, its most important security ally in Asia. The US is urging a more significant military role on Japan, including participating in TMD programs as well as support for US NMD. China is wary of both. In any event, Japan's stagnated economy is teetering between recession and sharp deflation with potential regional and worldwide impact.

Finally, there is the India-Pakistan rivalry. While technically not part of East Asia, actions by others, and in particular China reacting in part to the US, may worsen the already unstable relationship between these two nuclear-weapon-capable states. Missile defense is not yet part of that scene. It could be, assuming willing buyers and sellers, as their nuclear offensive missile threats to each other develop. Given the constant irritant and low-level warfare over Kashmir and other disputes, the Indian subcontinent is likely to remain the highest risk of nuclear war.
The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 was negotiated by the US and Soviet Union as part of the first step in the SALT context to control the inter-action between offensive and defensive strategic (that is, long-range) weapons. On the defensive side, a nationwide defense was prohibited. Surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and theatre missile defenses (TMDs) were generally excepted from the Treaty.\textsuperscript{1} The regional context of SALT, then later START, was the Atlantic and Europe, not the Pacific and Asia. This was reinforced by later agreements, particularly the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty signed in 1987 and the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE Treaty) signed in 1990. Unless ground-based and with a range greater than 500 kilometers, short-range or tactical nuclear missiles are not limited by any US-Soviet (Russian) agreement.

To date, East Asia has been not been involved in any similar arms-limitation agreements. Asian states are parties to multilateral conventions, such as the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 (NPT), the more recent Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty of 1996 (CTBT), as well as the Biological Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.

**The Basic Asymmetries**

The SALT/START/European agreements were focused on two different, but largely symmetrical rivalries. The first was the US-Soviet strategic nuclear standoff of the late 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. The threats were long range, primarily over the North Pole, and the *action-reaction* cycle involved both long-range *offensive* (ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers) and countering *defensive* (ABM and SAM) systems. Historically, the US and the Soviet Union (including Russia) have never fought a war against each other. Nevertheless, each had and still has the capability to annihilate the other. They almost came to nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

The second rivalry was represented by the two alliances, NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Each was led by a super power, and the alliances were massively armed with conventional and nuclear weapons across the length of their entire common border. The INF Treaty of 1987 abolished the entire class of US and Soviet land-based
missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers. Shorter-range land-based tactical offensive weapons, whether armed with conventional or nuclear warheads, were never the subject of US-Soviet or intra-European agreements, but the 1991 parallel unilateral reductions achieved by former President Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev were a major achievement. The CFE Treaty, initially negotiated on a pact-to-pact basis, limited the five categories of weapons that could be used in a surprise attack, including tactical aircrafts that by their nature are dual capable (nuclear and conventional, bombs and air-to-ground missiles). While the Warsaw Pact has dissolved, a revised CFE Treaty remains in force.

Among the many asymmetries involved in East Asia are that China has never sought to develop a ballistic missile defense, but it benefits from the ABM Treaty in which the US and the Soviet Union agreed in 1972 to ban nationwide defenses of their territories. China thus is a beneficiary although not a treaty partner. Currently, Russia has its single, ineffective ABM site around Moscow and the US has had no operable ABM site since 1976. Similarly, China is not a party to the INF Treaty, but it benefits from the destruction of the entire class of ground-based US and Soviet (now Russian) nuclear missiles with a 500 to 5,500 kilometer range.

Conversely, neither SAM nor TMD systems were central concerns to the US or the Soviet Union in 1972 when the ABM Treaty was signed, provided they were not capable of intercepting long-range ICBMs or SLBMs. From China's perspective, SAMs or TMDs on the territories of both Taiwan and Japan could perform a strategic (i.e., defense of homeland) role against medium or intermediate range aircraft and missiles. Therefore, SAMs and TMDs have a central and strategic importance in an East Asian setting.

**Terminology**

The terms national missile defense (NMD) and theatre missile defense (TMD) are inherently ambiguous. They must be defined, or redefined, when discussing East Asia.

By common understanding NMD, which in current parlance has replaced nationwide ABM, refers to defenses against long-range offensive ballistic missiles, ICBMs and SLBMs, which are invariably armed with nuclear warheads. The US and Soviet Union (now Russia) are the only two countries that have pursued and deployed NMD/ABM systems in defense of parts of their homeland. If a city or other soft target is to be defended, then the NMD/ABM system must be perfect because the destructive power of nuclear-armed ICBMs and SLBMs, particularly those armed with multiple independently-targetable re-entry vehicles (MIRVs) is so great. No country has developed effective technology for this task to date, and the prospect remains remote.
The term TMD, as used by the US but not others, is relatively unambiguous. It refers to defenses against lesser-range offensive ballistic missiles which, because of the geopolitical position of the US, does not include defense of its homeland (unless linked to an ABM/NMD system itself). Therefore, TMDs defend either US allies or US forces abroad.

Theatre missile defense of US allies, whether in Europe, the Middle East or Asia, usually refers to defense of their homeland against intermediate- or shorter range ballistic missiles. The threat could be nuclear, chemical, biological or conventional. From the perspective of the country being defended, this is a strategic defense. In this article, the term TMD-Homeland (or TMD-H) will be used when the role of the TMD is clearly strategic. Whether a TMD-H needs to be perfect depends on the type of incoming threat. If the threat is conventional, then the TMD need not be even near perfect. The defense of Israel cities in the Gulf War by US Patriot missiles provided needed reassurances to the Israeli population against the conventionally-armed SCUDs, and the threat of chemically armed SCUDs, even though the defense was in fact later shown to be militarily ineffective.

Defense of US troops in the field, as well as associated air bases and transport ships in harbors, against short-range ballistic missiles that are generally but not necessarily armed with conventional warheads is a recognized military mission but not yet within the capability of the US or any other country. This will be referred to as TMD-Military (or TMD-M). A recent example is the Patriot system used in the Gulf War to defend US troops. TMD-M generally need not be anywhere near perfect to accomplish its mission (an analogy being the RAF during the Battle of Britain). Nevertheless, the failure of a Patriot battery in Saudi Arabia led to the largest US casualties in the Gulf War in an era when the US appears to be moving toward an intolerance of any casualties.

While the conceptual difference between TMD-H and TMD-M is clear, the same technology is used for these two fundamentally different purposes and raise different concerns.

The United States

President George W. Bush will probably make detailed decisions on his NMD, TMD and anti-satellite (ASAT) programs by this summer or fall. It will then be up to Congress to decide each year whether or not to fund the President's budgetary requests. Over the past 40 years, Congress has frequently disagreed with the Executive, sometimes pushing NMD on a reluctant Executive (as was the case with Presidents Johnson and Clinton) while other times reducing or denying the funds requested (as with Nixon and Reagan). The present 50/50 split between Republicans
and Democrats in the Senate has no historical parallel and will probably change within a year.

Bush is likely to propose: (1) deployment of a ground-based NMD system with 100 to 200 non-nuclear interceptors, perhaps first located in North Dakota rather than Alaska, which might become operational between 2006 and 2008 at the earliest³; (2) vigorous research, development and testing programs on sea-based (particularly boost phase) and air-based interceptors, and space-based sensors, whether used for TMD or NMD; (3) deployment of TMD-M systems (currently Pac-2) outside the US with US forces, and willingness to provide these and improved versions (whether TMD-M or TMD-H) to US allies when they become available. What Bush might propose for ASATs, other than increased R&D, is not clear.

At some point Bush might decide to give six-months' notice of withdrawal from the ABM Treaty based on "supreme interests" of the US if Russia does not accept, within a "reasonable" time, treaty amendments that the Bush administration will propose.

Whether or not Bush will decide to shift the location of the ground-based interceptors from Alaska, the location that Clinton chose but which garners little support now, to North Dakota where a site would be more compliant with the ABM Treaty, is presently unknown.⁵ It is surely one of the many options under consideration, as is whether or not to deploy an X-band ABM radar on Shemya Island, as Clinton proposed, or simply upgrade the Clear (Alaska) early warning radar instead. Presumably, both North Korea and China would favor such changes, assuming the US decides to deploy an initial NMD somewhere, but neither would say so publicly. China, in particular, would still vigorously oppose any US NMD deployment that appeared capable of negating China's present minimal deterrence of 20 or so single-warhead ICBMs.

Whether Bush will decide to give a six-month's notice of withdrawal from the ABM Treaty if Russia balks at Treaty amendments is clearly possible, and will be urged on him by many in his Administration and Republican conservatives in Congress, notwithstanding the political flak this step would entail worldwide. A decision to do so would probably be coupled with significant, and unilateral if necessary, reductions in US strategic offensive weapons on ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers. The offensive reductions would presumably garner broad international support in East Asia and elsewhere. This support, though, would undoubtedly be undercut by the US following North Korea's example in 1993 and becoming only the second state to give notice of withdrawal from a post-World War II arms control treaty.⁶ Tension would be especially high during the six-month period.
The strong support the US is certain to show for TMD deployments outside the US, both in defense of allies and US forces deployed abroad, would raise concerns particularly in China. US sales of Pac-3s or their successors to Japan would be viewed by China as homeland defense (TMD-H), but Japan's current and independent concern with North Korean missiles could become stronger if North Korea does not formally cease its missile developments.\textsuperscript{7} US sale of Pac-3 or (in the future) Aegis destroyers to Taiwan, or US sea-based patrols in the Taiwan Straits coordinated with Taiwan, would probably be of greater concern to China than even a NMD system deployed in the continental United States. Both together would raise maximum concerns. How the Bush administration intends to deal with these China issues is unclear.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{Russia across Eurasia}

Russia's interest in missile defense is global, not regional. Since the primary rationale for the US NMD is the missile program of "rogue states" such as North Korea, and since Russia fears that a US NMD, even initially limited to counter North Korea, might serve as a "base" for a highly effective system capable of countering a reduced number of Russia ICBMs and SLBMs, Russia's interest is parallel to (but motivated differently from) that of the US in seeking a permanent halt to North Korea's nuclear program and ban on its exports, development and even manufacturing of missiles with a range greater than 300 kilometers. Vladimir Putin has already visited North Korea this year with these goals in mind, plus policies that could enhance Russian export of energy to South Korea. While Bush announced he is not ready to re-start missiles negotiations with North Korea "anytime soon," he may do so by mid-year or this fall, after more of his appointees are in office and his BMD programs announced. By then, North Korea may not be willing to talk.

While Russian (as well as Chinese) policies coincide with the US in seeking bans on North Korean nuclear and missile programs, the Bush administration is unlikely to change its drive for an "effective NMD" even if satisfactory, comprehensive and verifiable agreements are reached with North Korea. Other threats would be cited, such as Iran. However, the willingness of Congress to fund an early NMD deployment, as well as multi-faceted and aggressive NMD and ASAT research, development and test programs, could wither away with the demise of the North Korean threat in light of competing budget priorities.\textsuperscript{9}

\textbf{One China in two parts - mainland and Taiwan}

When the ABM Treaty came into effect in 1972, most Asians had never heard of it or SALT and those who did could not discern any substantial impact on their interests.\textsuperscript{10} Notwithstanding Secretary of Defense McNamara's 1967 speech justifying the deployment of the US Sentinel ABM system on the nascent threat from China, the
Soviet Union and not China was the prime focus of US concerns in the 1970s and thereafter. Further, China has never indicated an interest in developing and deploying ABM/NMD/TMD on its own. It appears unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.

The Clinton administration sought to convince China it should have no concerns with the proposed Alaska-based, phase one US NMD deployment. China was not persuaded. It focused on capability not intent, just as the US has always done with the Soviet (Russian) ABM deployment site around Moscow and the possible "upgrade" of Soviet SAMs to link with its ABM system. From China's perspective, the Clinton NMD was aligned against and intended to counter its existing ICBMs, not those of North Korea which are non-existent. Phases two and three of the Clinton scheme would have compounded China's concerns.

The US sold some Pac-2 TMDs to Taiwan in the 1990s and Taiwan has developed its own Sky Bow. Neither is viewed as effective for urban defense, which is their purported role, against hundreds of conventionally-armed missiles. Pac-3, the successor to Pac-2, is still in development and testing, as are other land-based and sea-based TMDs. Any sale to Taiwan of improved TMD capability would be of great concern to China. Nevertheless, there is considerable support for this in US Republican circles. China would undoubtedly assume the TMDs would be for Taiwan's homeland defense (TMD-H) and could encourage Taiwan independence, particularly if coupled with a US NMD.\cite{11}

Any deployment of improved TMDs in Japan by US forces or the Japanese defense forces for homeland defense would also raise concerns in China. The US and Japan have recently established a new US-Japan Commission on Arms-Control, Disarmament, Non-Proliferation and Verification. Inter-operability and strategic implications of Taiwanese TMD may be one agenda item.\cite{12} Unfortunately, the US-China dialogues on these issues to date appear as stilted as those between the US and Soviet Union in the early 1960s.

The two Koreas

The US has two concerns about North Korea. The first is its nuclear program that was the subject of the 1994 Agreed Framework. The Bush administration has publicly stated its support for these efforts, but may do nothing to speed up the slow pace. The second is the North Korean ballistic missile programs, involving both possible deployment in North Korea and exports to other "rogue states" such as Iran and Libya, as well as Pakistan. The missiles have not yet become the subject of agreement, notwithstanding the progress made under Clinton. His hope that agreement could be reached before he left office to justify a trip to Korea to sign a historic document was frustrated by several reasons, including North Korea's failure to accept rigorous
verification measures. Russia, China and Japan are all generally supportive of US initiatives in these two areas, although not necessarily the details or tactics. In the end though, while their firmness could be helpful, both efforts could collapse.

There is little role for TMD on the territory of South Korea. While TMD-M such as the present Pac-2s with US forces might have a marginal role in defense of air bases or port facilities in the southern part of the peninsula, TMD serves no role in the Seoul area. The cost exchange ratio is adverse. North Korean artillery and missiles would overwhelm whatever TMD was deployed in the area and Seoul could be destroyed by conventional weapons in any war. The Clinton administration intended eventually to deploy an X-band radar in South Korea for US NMD, but it could not help provide an effective defense for Seoul. South Korea's present position with respect to the US NMD program is unclear.

South Korea, of course, is central to all issues effecting the peninsular, even on those where the US is the prime negotiator with the North. The ultimate success of South Korea's Sunshine Policy depends on the North Korean nuclear and missile issues being resolved.

Japan and China

Japanese defense forces have deployed some Pac-2s. Their purpose is not readily apparent, but presumably are to defend high value military targets (TMD-M), and not urban areas, against conventional warheads. Japan's primary present concern appears to be North Korean missiles, but it is concerned that China is targeting it with nuclear weapons.

As its primary security ally in Asia, the US is urging Japan to take a more vigorous role supporting ballistic missile defense generally. For the moment, Japan appears most interested in its industry participating in BMD technology development.

India and Pakistan

The most predictable impact of ballistic missile defense on India and Pakistan would result from China increasing significantly its offensive ballistic missile capability, both in numbers and readiness, in response to a US deployment of NMD that China perceived directed at it. Under the circumstances, India might feel threatened by an increased Chinese threat, and therefore increase its missile capability against China. Pakistan, in turn, might then increase its nuclear forces. The situation on the Indian subcontinent, already inherently unstable, could worsen by this action-reaction cycle.
At present missile defense does not seem to be an issue on the subcontinent. India now has some SA-10 batteries from Russia. They are generally comparable to Pac-2s in that the SA-10 was designed as a SAM and improved to have some TMD capability. India does not have the SA-12B, a more capable Russian TMD system. If India were to deploy SAMs extensively and acquire an upgraded TMD, this could be destabilizing since Pakistan has nowhere to go to acquire SAMs/TMDs even if it wanted to purchase them.

**Conclusion**

Any firm conclusions about missile defense and East Asia are lacking, given the absence of a coherent framework for analyzing the issues, the current ineffectiveness of NMD and TMD systems, and the unknown timing and content of the Bush administration's proposals. But several tentative thoughts are worth offering.

There is no historical record of bilateral or regional negotiations in East Asia. The state most actively threatening to upset the status quo by introducing BMD issues is the US, which is not even located in East Asia. Most pressing is the need for the Bush Administration to consider, as none of its predecessors has done, the impact of NMD and TMD upsetting stability in the region.

When discussions or negotiations begin, whether bilateral or multilateral, the US, Russia and China will sometimes be aligned together, but other times adversarially, in the four sub-regional areas. In the two Koreas, their prime interests will be aligned in dealing with North Korea and each should view the situation as the highest urgency. In the case of China and Taiwan, the US and China could become diametrically opposed. The impact of missile defense on the relationship between China and Japan appears less clear and urgent. In the India-Pakistan situation, China's reaction to US NMD could be the most important variant since it will influence India's response.

Russia is a treaty partner of the US to the ABM Treaty, while China is not. Russia would probably accept modest Treaty amendments and a limited deployment of NMD. China is likely to oppose a range of US decisions, including military sales to Taiwan and any NMD deployment. What each would do if the US were to ignore totally their views is uncertain. Russia could withdraw from or refuse to implement one or more treaties if the US withdraws from the ABM Treaty. The NPT could begin to unravel.

The risk of war or increased instability could increase in three circumstances. First, North Korea, if isolated again and if the US and South Korea were to take military measures as in 1994, could strike out across the DMZ although it would be the eventual loser. More likely would be a continuation of exports of missiles. Second,
China, if Taiwan declares independence behind an upgraded TMD shield, could take military action of some sorts against Taiwan, although the specifics are unclear. Other types of actions would be certain. Third, an increase in deployed nuclear weapons by India, in response to China, would surely increase crisis instability in South Asia.

The two most urgent steps are comprehensive discussions, leading to negotiations, between the US and China and the renewal of negotiations between the US and North Korea. With respect to North Korea, some have interpreted the Bush Administration's rejection of negotiations "anytime soon" as a radical change in policy from its predecessor. Others, including this author, are more optimistic and view it as a pause while the Administration staffs up, and carefully fashions its policy. The readiness of the US to begin negotiations sooner rather than later appears singularly important. US-China relations are at a fork in the road, and the window of opportunity with North Korea could shut, as it has so frequently in past years.

FOOTNOTES

2. This a fundamental point, made by George Rathjens in his Epilogue to the recent Pugwash Occasional Paper, supra note 1.
3. The timing appears more uncertain all the time. It is probable that details will not be announced before the Senate votes on the President's number one priority, tax reduction, which is unlikely to occur before June at the earliest.
4. Even if the interceptors were initially based in North Dakota, there will be at least one large radar in Alaska. There is currently one there in Clear, Alaska, for early warning. This radar could be upgraded, together with those in Thule and Fylingdales, to perform ABM radar tracking functions, as Clinton proposed.
5. A prime Treaty issue raised even by a switch from Alaska to North Dakota would remain the ban on a nationwide ABM system in Article I.
6. The North Korean three-month notice under the NPT, then suspension of it the day before it became effective, is chronicled in Don Oberdorfer, The Two Koreas (Basic Books, 1997), pp. 279-86.
7. See generally Michael J. Green and Katsuhisa Furukawa, New Ambitions, Old Obstacles: Japan and Its Search for an Arms Control Strategy, Arms Control

8. For a general discussion of BMD and China, see Charles Ferguson, Sparking a Buildup: U.S. Missile Defense and China's Nuclear Arsenal, ACT (March 2000), pp. 13-18; Banning Garrett, Facing the China Factor, ACT (October 2000), pp. 14-16. In April, President Bush will have to make a decision on Taiwan's annual request for military sales. Republicans in Congress, as usual, are the strongest supporters of arms sales to Taiwan as evidenced by a staff report from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. See Bill Gertz, Senate report urges arms for Taiwan, Washington Times, Mar. 12, 2001, p. A1; Robert Kagan, China's Game of Chicken, Washington Post, Mar. 12, 2001, p. A17. China's Deputy Premier Qian Qichen is scheduled to meet with President Bush on March 22. The President's decision is likely to be made in mid-April. If he denies anything on Taiwan's current list, some Republicans in Congress will urge they be provided notwithstanding.


14. The US did intervene to block Taiwan's and South Korea's moves toward nuclear-weapon capability and to limit the range of South Korean ballistic missiles.