
VOLUME 11, NUMBER 3, NOVEMBER 2000

NBR ANALYSIS

Asian Reactions to U.S. Missile Defense

Michael J. Green and Toby F. Dalton

 **NBR** THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF ASIAN RESEARCH

The *NBR Analysis* (ISSN 1052-164X), which is published five times annually by The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR), offers timely reports on countries, events, and issues from recognized specialists. The views expressed in these essays are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of other NBR research associates or institutions that support NBR.

NBR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization devoted to bridging the policy, academic, and business communities with advanced policy-relevant research on Asia. Through publications, conferences, reports, the *AccessAsia* online database of Asia scholars, and other projects, NBR serves as an international clearinghouse on important issues concerning East Asia, South Asia, and the former Soviet Union. NBR does not take policy positions, but rather sponsors studies that promote the development of effective and far-sighted policy.

One-year subscription rates for the *NBR Analysis* are \$30 for individuals and \$40 for institutions. Two-year subscription rates are \$55 for individuals and \$70 for institutions. Single issues are \$10 each. Overseas postage add \$15 per year for subscriptions; add \$3 for first copy of a single issue, and \$1 for each additional copy.

This report may be reproduced for personal use. Otherwise, its articles may not be reproduced in full without the written permission of NBR. When information from this journal is cited or quoted, please cite the author and The National Bureau of Asian Research.

The Henry M. Jackson Foundation contributes funding to the *NBR Analysis* series.

NBR is a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation under I.R.C. Sec. 501(c)(3), qualified to receive tax-exempt contributions.

This is the forty-eighth *NBR Analysis*.

© 2000 by The National Bureau of Asian Research.

Printed in the United States of America.

For further information about NBR, contact:

THE NATIONAL BUREAU OF ASIAN RESEARCH
4518 UNIVERSITY WAY NE, SUITE 300
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98105
206-632-7370 PHONE
206-632-7487 FAX
nbr@nbr.org EMAIL
<http://www.nbr.org>

Foreword

The security balance in the Asia-Pacific region has changed significantly in the last five years, primarily due to the buildup of offensive missile forces by China and the development by North Korea of longer-range missiles capable of reaching Japan and soon possibly the United States. Recent missile threat assessments conducted by the U.S. intelligence community have highlighted these growing challenges to U.S. security and have led many in the United States to call for missile defenses to protect U.S. troops in Asia as well as the United States in general. However, a U.S. decision to deploy either theater missile defense (TMD) or national missile defense (NMD) will introduce a new defense dilemma into the Asian security calculus.

The implications of the missile defense dilemma in Asia are twofold. On one hand, the United States would be immune to the threat of missile attack against U.S. troops in the region or on U.S. territory. On the other hand, the resulting diminution in other nations' security could drive them to build more capable missiles—able to defeat U.S. missile defense systems—thereby decreasing regional security and again heightening the missile threat. Reactions to U.S. missile defense programs differ among Asia-Pacific nations depending on the system to be deployed (i.e., TMD or NMD), but also depending on their relationship with the United States, their specific security situation, and their perceptions of how missile defense will change the balance of power in the region.

In assessing the impact of TMD and NMD on these Asia-Pacific nations, Michael Green, senior fellow for Asian security at the Council on Foreign Relations and professorial lecturer at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and Toby Dalton, Ph.D. student in political science at the University of Washington and research intern at The National Bureau of Asian Research, analyze the current political/strategic context for each Asia-Pacific country, potential responses to U.S. deployment of TMD and NMD, and other variables that could affect those reactions. Dr. Green and Mr. Dalton conclude the paper with several recommendations for the U.S. government to consider in making missile defense deployment decisions.

Despite the fears of many actors in the Asia-Pacific region, Dr. Green and Mr. Dalton argue that current U.S. TMD plans are unlikely to diminish strategic stability in East Asia. On the other hand, U.S. NMD may create instability in the region, and the costs of deploying the system must be weighed against the defense benefits to be gained. The strongest opponents of U.S. missile defense are, of course, China, Russia, and North Korea, while U.S. allies in the region (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia) generally support TMD and, in some cases NMD. There are also countries that will be collaterally affected by U.S. missile defense, in particular India and the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and their reactions are mixed.

This paper was undertaken with the sponsorship of the United States Pacific Command (PACOM). As with all NBR studies, the authors are solely responsible for their paper's content and recommendations.

Richard J. Ellings
President
The National Bureau of Asian Research

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABL	Airborne Laser
ABM	Anti-Ballistic Missile
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASAT	Anti-Satellite
ASCM	Anti-Ship Cruise Missile
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BM	Battle Management
BMD	Ballistic Missile Defense
BMDO	Ballistic Missile Defense Organization
BPI	Boost-Phase Intercept
C-1	Configuration 1
C3I	Command, Control, Communications, and Intelligence
CFE	Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty
CTBT	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
CBW	Chemical and Biological Weapons
DF	Dong Feng (East Wind)
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INF	Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty
IRBM	Intermediate-Range Ballistic Missile
LACM	Land Attack Cruise Missile
LEAP	Lightweight Exoatmospheric Projectile
LWR	Light Water Reactor
MIRV	Multiple, Independently-Targetable Reentry Vehicles
MRBM	Medium-Range Ballistic Missile
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NAD	Navy Area Defense
NMD	National Missile Defense
NPT	Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty
NTW	Navy Theater Wide

PAC	Patriot Advanced Capability
PRC	People's Republic of China
R&D	Research and Development
ROK	Republic of Korea
RV	Reentry Vehicle
SAM	Surface-to-Air Missile
SLBM	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missile
SLV	Space Launch Vehicle
SM	Standard Missile
SOFA	Status of Force Agreement
SRBM	Short-Range Ballistic Missile
SSM	Surface-to-Surface Missile
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
THAAD	Theater High-Altitude Air Defense
TMD	Theater Missile Defense
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

Asian Reactions to U.S. Missile Defense

Michael J. Green and Toby F. Dalton

The United States is likely to decide in the near future to deploy theater missile defense (TMD), and possibly national missile defense (NMD). In considering the strategic implications of missile defense deployments for the Asia-Pacific region, it is important to anticipate both the direct and collateral impact and to separate current rhetoric from potential or likely responses by regional actors. Current U.S. theater missile defense plans are unlikely to diminish strategic stability in East Asia, although TMD cooperation with Taiwan would certainly undermine U.S. relations with Beijing. U.S.-deployed national missile defense might provoke responses that affect regional strategic stability and must be weighed against the costs of providing effective defense against emerging missile threats. NMD based on a boost-phase intercept system might have the least adverse effect on strategic stability and should be explored more seriously. U.S. allies in the region generally support TMD, but are cautious regarding U.S. NMD plans. Alliance perspectives should be a critical part of any decision on NMD. Opponents of missile defense in Asia, particularly China, have few practical options other than proliferation of their missile inventories to redress whatever diminution in their security missile defense might cause. In this context, it is difficult to distinguish planned modernization of nuclear missile forces from deliberate responses to missile defense. Although President Clinton has deferred an NMD deployment decision to the next administration, delaying for now the missile defense dilemma for Asian nations, these questions will not disappear.

Michael J. Green is senior fellow for Asian security at the Council on Foreign Relations, based in Washington, D.C. Dr. Green is also a professorial lecturer at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and a consultant to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He is currently working on an NBR project on Japanese security policy with Ambassador Michael Armacost of The Brookings Institution and Dr. Kenneth Pyle of NBR and the University of Washington. Toby F. Dalton is a Ph.D. student in political science at the University of Washington and research intern at NBR. Mr. Dalton was previously project associate with the Non-Proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C.

Introduction

The United States is likely to decide in the near future to deploy theater missile defense (TMD), and possibly national missile defense (NMD).¹ These decisions could have a profound effect on the security dynamics of East Asia. Already China, North Korea, and Russia are warning of negative consequences, while U.S. allies are assessing the costs and benefits of participating in TMD or supporting the United States should Washington proceed with NMD. The challenge for U.S. policymakers and military officials, and the primary purpose of this essay, is to identify the potential consequences, both direct and collateral, of deployment for these nations, to anticipate their likely reactions, and to determine an approach to missile defense that will reinforce regional stability. It is difficult to forecast precisely how some nations will respond and therefore it is necessary to consider: 1) a broad range of contributing political and economic factors beyond the effect of the weapons systems themselves; 2) the full range of possible responses; and 3) which responses are most likely, given the costs and benefits to each particular nation.

The next section of this essay discusses the background to the missile defense debate and the current status of several U.S. missile defense systems. The following three sections assess the impact of TMD and NMD on several important nations in the Asia-Pacific region. The analysis for each nation begins with a discussion of the current strategic and political context.² Next, potential responses to specific U.S. systems are identified, with forecasting about the likelihood of each. Finally, other variables that could affect reactions are discussed. Tables summarizing current policy, security impact, and likely and extreme responses are also included for each nation and are useful as a quick reference source. The three sections are

¹ A theater missile defense (TMD) system covers a limited geographical area (a theater), while the U.S. national missile defense (NMD) system will cover the entire nation. The capability of a missile defense system is characterized by: 1) the speed of the interceptor; 2) the level of threat it can defend against; 3) the point at which it attacks an incoming missile; and 4) the geographic area it can cover. Less capable TMD systems like Patriot use slow interceptors against short-range missiles and cover limited areas such as cities or bases. More capable TMD systems will employ faster interceptors, attack incoming medium- (MRBMs) or intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) at the edge or just outside the earth's atmosphere, and can cover extended areas (in some cases, such as Japan, the entire territory of a nation). The U.S. NMD system will use very fast interceptors to attack incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) outside the earth's atmosphere and will protect all fifty states.

² For a chronology on TMD in Asia, see "Theater Missile Defense (TMD) in Northeast Asia: An Annotated Chronology, 1990-Present," Center for Nonproliferation Studies, available at <<http://cns.miis.edu/research/neasia/tmdchron.htm>> (accessed September 15, 2000).

divided into responses by U.S. allies (Japan, the Republic of Korea [ROK], Taiwan, and Australia), responses by opponents (the People's Republic of China [PRC], the Democratic People's Republic of Korea [DPRK], and Russia), and responses by others collaterally affected (India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN]). The essay closes with a section of policy recommendations.

Background

Military history is littered with defense dilemmas, usually sparked by advances in weaponry and strategy. A defense dilemma typically occurs when a group or nation acquires a military capability that threatens the security order in its region. To avoid coercion or even military defeat its neighbors must respond by redressing the imbalance. Thus the dilemma is how to respond when faced with new weaponry that disturbs the existing order and threatens peace and security.

In most cases, advances in offensive weaponry induce defense dilemmas. Nations facing an enemy with a new weapon typically respond by building a similar offensive capability. When the growing power of the German Navy began to threaten British interests and naval dominance prior to World War I, the British responded by developing a new type of battleship, the dreadnought, which had overwhelming firepower and range compared to the German ships of the time. This began a great race of battleship construction between the two nations and set the stage for Anglo-German conflict in the first World War. However, responses to new offensive threats do not always lead to spiraling defense dilemmas of this sort. When the Soviet Union forward-deployed SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) beginning in 1977, for example, the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) counterbalanced this threat with Pershings and ground-launched cruise missiles, which ultimately helped to reestablish strategic stability. In that case, predictions of a defense dilemma or a split within the Atlantic alliance proved wrong.

Ballistic missile defense (BMD) is both the result and cause of a different kind of defense dilemma. On the one hand, it signals a choice to resolve a defense dilemma by defensive rather than offensive means. On the other hand, introducing a defensive system can upset the security balance in ways that offensive systems do not by giving the possessor of missile defense the ability to attack first and then defend against any retaliation.