JAPAN AND THE NAVY THEATER-WIDE MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM

Recommended Citation

Japan will certainly continue to reassess the costs and benefits of its involvement in the NTW program. It is important that Japan must include a realistic view of both its costs and benefits and consider whether other alternatives might better serve its national interests. Moreover, while developing such a system might reduce the strategic costs to Japan, it might also remove a key deterrent to any future Chinese aggression, namely a defense against Chinese missiles. Indeed, discussing this option would require Japan to reveal whether it possesses the technology to develop a countermeasures system that could keep its missiles out of range of the interceptors. (19)

The NTW issue is linked even more directly to NTW since there have been proposals to use NTW as a sea-based missile defense system. Doing so would be a clear violation of the ABM Treaty since the treaty explicitly forbids sea-based defenses. Still, Japan has not issued any public statements indicating that it is interested in developing such a system. However, the issue may become higher profile as development of the system proceeds. A similar concern has become an issue in light of the NTW system's ability to provide broad coverage of Japan against attack by Nodong missiles. Our calculations show that a single NTW ship station near Japan would be sufficient to engage a Nodong missile launched against any part of Japan. Using NTW would not only counter the direct threat posed by the Nodong missile, but it would also provide a broader defensive umbrella against other missile threats to Japan. Moreover, such a defense system might reduce the overall cost of developing an ABM system that could defend against multiple targets. A sea-based missile defense system would also provide Japan with greater flexibility in deploying its defense assets in the region, since it could be relocated to other parts of the world as needed.

Japan is therefore faced with a difficult decision. Should it continue to invest in the NTW program, or should it consider other alternatives? The answer to this question will depend on Japan's overall national security strategy, as well as its relationships with both the United States and China. In the meantime, Japan must attempt to intercept warheads above the atmosphere, and is therefore susceptible to the same kinds of countermeasures of the kind discussed in connection with the NMD system. (10) The United States has developed advanced interceptors that are capable of downlinking targets above the atmosphere and are therefore likely to be effective against similar threats. Moreover, Japan must continue to develop its own countermeasures system, since the United States is unlikely to provide Japan with such systems in the future. Thus, the issue of developing a countermeasures system is likely to remain on Japan's policy agenda for some time to come.

Japan's involvement in the NTW program appears to be driven primarily by two concerns. First, there is a growing concern about the potential costs of deploying an ABM system in the region. In particular, Japan is concerned about the high cost of developing an ABM system, as well as the political and military implications of deploying such a system in Asia. Moreover, Japan is concerned about the potential threat posed by North Korea's missile program, which is seen as a significant threat to Japan's national security. Therefore, Japan may be interested in exploring other alternatives to an ABM system that might better address these concerns.

Japan's second concern is its relationship with the United States. Japan is a key ally of the United States and is therefore likely to continue to support the NTW program in order to maintain its strategic relationship with the United States. However, Japan is also concerned about the potential implications of deploying an ABM system in the region, as well as the potential threat posed by North Korea's missile program. Therefore, Japan may be interested in exploring other alternatives to an ABM system that might better address these concerns.

The current debate appears to overstate the potential benefits and understate the potential costs. When assessing its involvement in the NTW program, Japan must include a realistic view of both its costs and benefits and consider whether other alternatives might better serve its national interests. Moreover, while developing such a system might reduce the strategic costs to Japan, it might also remove a key deterrent to any future Chinese aggression, namely a defense against Chinese missiles. Indeed, discussing this option would require Japan to reveal whether it possesses the technology to develop a countermeasures system that could keep its missiles out of range of the interceptors. (19)