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US BMD PROGRAM UNDER BUSH ADMINISTRATION:
ITS INFLUENCE ON ARMS RACE AND PROLIFERATION IN EAST ASIA

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ABSTRACT

East Asia is a region consisting of nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states with important nuclear potentials. Yet, a nuclear stability has existed for a long time with both nuclear arms race among nuclear-weapon states and nuclear proliferation in non-nuclear-weapon states restrained. The US BMD program particularly under the Bush administration, even still confronting various – above all, technological – difficulties, will violate such nuclear stability, giving incentives to a new round of nuclear arms race and

proliferation. Believing their security are undermined by US BMD program for real or mis-perceived reasons, and encouraged by US behavior of annulling the ABM treaty, the relevant countries in East Asia will try to readdress the unfavorable situation by expanding and improving its nuclear capabilities or acquiring nuclear-missile weapons. Therefore, it is the best if the Bush administration can abandon the BMD program, or at least slow down the program. For all the above reasons, this will be a real blessing to the global as well as East Asia stability and peace.

Geographically, East Asia consists of (east) Russia, Mongolia, China, North Korea, South Korea and Japan. However, since it has forward-deployed its troops into this region and formed military alliances with Japan and South Korea, the United States can be regarded as a part of East Asia politically.

East Asia is the mot populous and highly armed region in the world, even in terms of nuclear weapons. Among its seven political members, three are declared nuclear states (the US, Russia and China) and three are states with various potentials of developing nuclear weapons. For example, according to some Japanese mass media, Japan can make its own atom bombs within 183 days. (2) The only exception is Mongolia. Nevertheless, for a long time, nuclear arms race and nuclear proliferation has been held in check in East Asia. Such nuclear stability, however, can be gradually overturned by the acceleration of US TMD and NMD programs under the Bush administration.

NUCLEAR STABILITY IN EAST ASIA

Even though nearly all of the states in East Asia are either declared or potential nuclear-weapon states, a kind of nuclear stability has existed in the region since the early 1970s, with both nuclear arms race and nuclear proliferation restrained.

Nuclear arms race can only occur among nuclear weapon states. Fortunately, this risk was controlled in East Asia mainly for two reasons.

1. A special game rule of MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) was established when the ABM treaty of 1972 was signed by the United States and Russia. Since then, the two nuclear superpowers have continued negotiations on limitation and reduction of their nuclear weapons, including warheads and vehicles. Consequently their nuclear arms race was curbed by some mutual agreements.

2. China declared a No-First-Use policy in the early 1960s and has factually followed a doctrine of minimal nuclear deterrence. It has neither capability nor intention to participate in any nuclear arms race. As Mao Zedong stated in 1961: “Nuclear weapons are something for frightening others and will not be used … such a weapon will not be used, and the more they are produced, the more nuclear wars can not be initiated.” (3)

While nuclear proliferation depends on both non-nuclear-weapon states and nuclear-weapon states, some positive factors can also be found to prevent its occurrence in East Asia.

1. The three nuclear-weapon states have not promoted nuclear proliferation in this region. Furthermore, they have discouraged it. For example, US’s pressure on Seoul led the latter to abandon its efforts of developing nuclear weapons and to sign the NPT in 1975 although the country’s commitment to the treaty was still a question until the end of 1970s. (4) Likewise, the other two nuclear-weapon states in the region have adopted

responsible attitudes towards the issue.

2. The three non-nuclear-weapon states in the region have not intended to pursue or have stopped pursuing active nuclear weapons programs. As allies of the United States, Japan and South Korea have been placed beneath the nuclear umbrella of the United States and its pressure of nonproliferation. This means that they don't need to develop their own nuclear weapons on the one hand and will be opposed by the United States if they plan to do so. As for North Korea, under the terms of the US-North Korean "Agreed Framework" concluded in October 1994, it has pledged to freeze operations at most of its facilities at the Yongbyon Nuclear Research Center, which is believed to be involved in its secret nuclear weapons program. (5)

In sum, a kind of nuclear stability has existed in East Asia even during the latter stage of the Cold War. It is advanced and supported by the United States. However, such stability has been challenged by US's plans of developing and deploying TMD and NMD, especially under the Bush administration.

US BMD UNDER THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION

On January 20, 1999, William S. Cohen, US Secretary of Defense, declared that DoD planned to allocate additional funds to NMD and TMD programs to meet the growing ballistic missile threats from "rogue" states against US territory, US forces deployed overseas and its allies. Also, Secretary Cohen announced that the United States will negotiate with Russia over an amendment to the ABM Treaty if ncecessary: "While our NMD development program is being conducted consistent with the terms of the ABM Treaty, our deployment may require modification to the treaty and the Administration is working to determine the nature and scope of these modifications." (6)

Under the Bush administration, the United States has been more vigorous in promoting the BMD program than his predecessor. Even before ascending the throne of US President, Mr. Bush repeatedly advocated building a more expansive defensive system than the one President Clinton proposed first and deferred last September. On Jan. 8, 2001, Mr. Bush told some senior lawmakers in Austin, Texas, that he strongly supported moving ahead with a national missile defense, despite acknowledged opposition at home and abroad to such system: "It's a sensitive subject for leaders of different countries around the world. On the other hand, I think it's our obligation to do everything we can to protect America and our allies from the real threats of the 21st century." (7)

For the purpose, he formed a national security team consisting of BMD supporters. In particular, as Steven Lee Myers pointed out, in nominating Rumsfeld as his Secretary of Defense, President Bush has signaled that "the politically and diplomatically divisive goal of building a shield against nuclear missiles will be at the core of the new administration's national security agenda." (8) For over two years, his name, more than any others, has driven the debate over whether to build an NMD. In July 1998, a congressional commission chaired by Rumsfeld issued an unclassified report that led the Clinton administration to propose its own limited version of an NMD. "The Rumsfeld report was the main reason that the debate was gradually turned around," said Senator Jon. Kyl, Republican of Arizona and an advocator of BMD. (9) In fact, while picking Mr. Rumsfeld, Mr. Bush stressed his prominence on the issue of BMD: "We'll have a person who is thoughtful and considerate and wise on the subject of missile defense." (10) In addition, other major members of President Bush's national security team, including Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Powell, also share the dream of building the

sort of shield against nuclear ballistic missiles that President Reagan envisioned in the 1980s. With these people on the national security team, it is reasonable to anticipate that the Bush administration will be more rightward on the BMD issue.

When their nominations as Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense were announced respectively on December 16 and 28, 2000, Powell referred to a defensive shield as "an essential part" of US security, and Rumsfeld stated that he would not rule out defenses based on the ground, as President Clinton proposed, or at sea and in space. The latter also said, "The proliferation of WMD and the delivery systems for them is extensive across the world." (11) These remarks indicate that his assessment of the threat of a ballistic missile attack on the US has not changed.

Since the presidential inauguration on January 20, 2001, the Bush administration has confirmed its determination to move quickly ahead with its BMD program with both words and actions. The following are merely two examples:

In late January (beginning from Jan. 22), the possibility of war in space turned from pure scientific fiction to realistic planning by the Space War Center at Schriever Air Force Base, Colorado. The simulation was based on a scenario with growing tension between the United States and China in 2017, while country "Red" massed its forces for possible attack on its small neighbor, "Brown", which then asked "Blue" for help. Both Red and Blue possessed microsatellites capable of maneuvering against other satellites, blocking their view, jamming their transmission or even frying their electronics with radiation. They also had ground-based lasers that could temporarily dazzle or permanently blind the optics of satellites, and the ability to attack each other's computers – in military parlance, "official information warfare capabilities". In addition, the Blue side had a national missile defense system as well as reusable space planes that may be employed to launch new satellites into orbit or repair and refuel those already there. Not surprisingly, the war game proved that many weapons owned by US air force – missile defense, anti-satellites lasers and "reusable space planes" – could have a useful role in deterring future wars by discouraging adversaries from thinking that they can preemptively knock out the United States. (12)

On Feb. 3, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld spoke at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, an annual meeting attended by a score of defense ministers and 200 other specialists: "The United States intends to develop and deploy a missile defense designed to defend our people and our forces against a limited missile attack and is prepared to assist friends and allies threatened by missile attack to deploy such defenses." (13)

Understandably, while underlining the new approach in Washington, Senator Joseph Lieberman, the Democratic nominee for vice President last year, commented that US missile defense under the Bush administration involved "not a question of whether, only when and how." (14)

NEGATIVE INFLUENCE OF US BMD PROGRAM ON NUCLEAR STABILITY IN EAST ASIA

If we turn to the question of when and how to advance the BMD program, a few factors can be found that will impel the Bush administration to go ahead promptly. These include the harsh weather condition in Alaska (15) as well as the pressure from proponents of NMD (16). Generally speaking, nevertheless, the Bush administration is restrained and contained by financial, political and technological difficulties in its efforts

to move forward rapidly with the BMD program.

In the technological field, above all, the Bush administration has to solve several key issues before it can push the BMD program ahead vigorously. One is what kind of NMD system that the US should focus on first: A Clinton model system with 100 limited interceptors in Alaska and North Dakota to shoot down warheads in space; Or a system with a much wider range of technologies, including, most notably, sensors in space – an element banned by ABM Treaty – and boost-phase interceptors that would shoot down enemy missiles before they reach space as they are easy to locate and present large targets? (17)

Another major issue facing the Bush administration is how to find a way to defend the allies. The Clinton's anti-missile system would protect the United States but not its allies. From Rumsfeld's terse description in Munich, the Bush administration appears to intend creating something equivalent to a global defense system – probably a mobile one – that could defend the United States, its overseas armed forces and allied nations in Europe and Asia. For that goal, a ship-based interceptor system as well as an airplane- or space-based laser system may be needed. But, as Stephen W. Young said recently, "It will be extremely difficult, however, to deploy any of these systems, even if Mr. Bush wins a second term. The sea-based option would require major changes to an existing, shorter-range system, itself years from deployment. While the space-based option is more than a decade away from its first test flight, and is sure to cause a storm of international criticism." (18)

Even so, the US BMD program under the Bush administration has produced and will produce some major negative influences on the nuclear stability in East Asia.

First, it will cause strategic instability especially between Russia and the United States, drawing them into a new round of arms competition.

As a fact, NMD that the United States currently intends to deploy will violate the strategic nuclear balance between the two nuclear superpowers because it runs against the ABM treaty they signed in 1972. This treaty is the basis upon which all their agreements for limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons were founded. With offensive capabilities in their hands, both sides are afraid of nuclear retaliations, and, thus, the "balance of terror" is shaped. US BMD program, especially NMD program, would weaken this strategic relationship of "Mutual Assured Destruction". Russia will try to improve its security by developing and deploying its own BMD systems or enhancing its own arsenals of strategic offensive weapons to remedy the emerging imbalance. In other words, the direct result brought about by Bush's program of BMD is a new cycle of nuclear arms race between the US and Russia.

Second, the BMD program of the United States, especially its cooperative research and development with Japan and its intention to extend the TMD system or transfer the relevant technology to a Chinese island – Taiwan – will encourage ultra-nationalism in Japan and separatism in Taiwan, encroaching upon China's sovereignty and hurting the feelings of Chinese. General PENG Guangqian, a senior research fellow in Chinese Military Academy warned that "it is not different from establishment of a paramilitary alliance and violates fundamentally the political basis of the Sino-US military relations" if the United States brings the Taiwan area into its TMD system. (19) SHA Zukang, Chief of Arms Control Department in China's Foreign Ministry, declared on Feb. 20, 2001 that China must possess necessary and sufficient self-defense means. It will not sit back and

watch these means weakened or deprived in any form. (20)

Third, the BMD program of the Bush administration will provide a stimulus to nuclear proliferation in East Asia. In fact, a cooperative TMD system between the US and Japan (or any other non-nuclear-weapon member in the region) implies proliferation of missile and, at least, missile technologies. Also, US BMD program is a kind of moral encouragement to others' proliferation. They will justify to themselves: "While the US can tear up the ABM treaty, why can't we follow its example?" Another likely scenario resulted from such possible stimulus on proliferation is that North Korea, worried of revival of Japanese militarism under protection of US TMD, will drawback from the "Agreed Framework" and seek security by arming its own missiles with nuclear warheads. In turn, this will bring about a vicious circle of nuclear proliferation in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

East Asia is a region consisting of nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states with important nuclear potentials. Yet, a nuclear stability has existed for a long time with both nuclear arms race among nuclear-weapon states and nuclear proliferation in non-nuclear-weapon states restrained. The US BMD program particularly under the Bush administration, even still confronting various – above all, technological – difficulties, will violate such nuclear stability, giving incentives to a new round of nuclear arms race and proliferation. Believing their security are undermined by US BMD program for real or mis-perceived reasons, and encouraged by US behavior of annulling the ABM treaty, the relevant countries in East Asia will try to readdress the unfavorable situation by expanding and improving its nuclear capabilities or acquiring nuclear-missile weapons.

Therefore, it is the best if the Bush administration can abandon the BMD program, or at least slow down the program. For all the above reasons, this will be a real blessing to the global as well as East Asia stability and peace.

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(2) Exposed by Japanese Mass Media, Japan Can Make Its Atomic Bombs with 183 days, see
http://www.long-net.com/index.htm.
(3) Edited by the Foreign Ministry of PRC & Achieves Institute of Central committee of CCP, Selection of Diplomatic Works of Mao Zedong, Beijing, Beijing: Press of Achieves Institute of Central committee of CCP, 1994, pp476-477.
(4) Leonard S. Spector, Nuclear Ambitions, Boulder: Westview Press, 1990, p.122
(5) Leonard S. Spector et et al., Tracking Nuclear Proliferation, A Carnegie Endowment Book, 1995, p. 103.
(6) Cohen's National Missile Defense Statement: What did it mean? by John Issacs, Council for A livable World, Jan. 21, 1999, http://www.clw.oprg.
(7) International Herald Tribune, Jan. 10, 2001, p. 1.
(8) International Herald Tribune, Dec. 30-31, 2000, Jan. 1, 2001, p. 1.
(9) International Herald Tribune, Dec. 30-31, 2000, Jan. 1, 2001, p. 1.
(10) International Herald Tribune, Dec. 30-31, 2000, Jan. 1, 2001, p. 4.
(11) International Herald Tribune, Dec. 30-31, 2000, Jan. 1, 2001, p. 4.
(12) International Herald Tribune, Jan. 30, 2001, pp. 1, 4.

(13) International Herald Tribune, Feb. 5, 2001, p. 1.
(14) International Herald Tribune, Feb. 5, 2001, p. 1.
(15) Under a timetable drafted by the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization in Pentagon, it has to be decided by coming March whether to authorize initial construction of a sophisticated new radar station at Shemya Island during the relative short summer season this year. The radar station is a part of the limited ground-based system that President Clinton declined to approve last September. If the construction can not start soon, it will mean at least a year's delay. This outcome would in turn postpone completion of the whole system.
(16) They argue that President Bush "will be making a major mistake if he lets his administration subject missile defense to a lengthy policy review" because "it will give opponents time to organize and inevitably entangle the issue in the 2002 congressional elections". Instead waiting, they conclude, the Bush administration should seize the moment. See International Herald Tribune, Jan. 27, 2001, p. 6.
(17) International Herald Tribune, Jan. 27, 2001, p. 6.
(18) International Herald Tribune, Feb. 6, 2001, p. 6.
(19) Guoji-zhanwang (World Outlook), no. 12, December, 2000, p. 5.
(20) Xin-min-wan-bao (New People Evening), Feb. 22, 2001, p. 16.



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