TMD, US-JAPAN RELATIONS, AND EAST ASIAN SECURITY

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The above analysis of TMD implications might be too gloomy for many advocates of TMD. Unfortunately, the danger is real. In the past two years, we have already witnessed a lot how TMD issue could damage East Asia and may in a critical way.

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The US and Japan in terms of military power and technological capabilities. Since these two countries are the most powerful in the region, especially in the US-Japan alliance, which is considered a super military alliance without any constraint certainly will raise more suspicions and uncertainties among countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Some of them may have to choose to invest more in advanced weapons and military technologies, trying to prepare for the worse. As a consequence, certain kind of arms race in this region may be inevitable in the long term. TMD might force China to increase its military capability even further, thus further strengthening strategic capabilities. Japan is already a major military power in many aspects. As the biggest economic power in East Asia, Japan has been keeping the second largest defense expenditure in the world for years. In addition to having the strongest military force among its security partners, Japan is also considered as an important player in the regional military muscle power more actively, to conduct TMD cooperation, and especially the technology transfers with the US, and to deploy a TMD system on Japanese soil, Japan must first address various constitutional and other legal restraints. For example, the US-Japan alliance poses a serious constitutional and political problem for Japan if the US and Japan opt for a TMD system with boost-phase interceptors. Actually we have already witnessed some repercussions of TMD on the diplomatic relationships between the US and Japan. Despite the fact that it is within the framework of the US-Japan alliance, the Japan-US joint statement in 1995 to provide logistics assistance to the US troops that become involved in "contingency in the areas surrounding Japan," although neither country has made the clear view of such a "contingency" and the legal basis for Japanese active participation in military action for all purposes in the areas surrounding Japan — for example, a conflict on the Korean Peninsula — Japan might be reluctant to join in the US military intervention partly because of its vulnerabilities to possible WMD retaliations.

The US-Japan alliance and China. The US-Japan alliance is a vital instrument to the stability and security of East Asia, and as such, the alliance even more becomes a vital factor in regional stability and security, ironically that which TMD is supposed to achieve. TMD might have an impact between the US and Japan and the potential of the US alliance to take military actions around Asia. Mainly due to Japan's reluctance to join the US on the joint TMD program, it poses a serious threat to the stability and security of East Asia. If Japan will eventually join the joint TMD program, the US-Japan alliance will be strengthened and the joint R&D of TMD will increase the military cooperation between the US and Japan, enhance the military and dual-use technology transfers between the two countries, and as such, make their alliance even closer and stronger. There is also an argument between both the US and Japan that TMD is able to improve military interoperability and intelligence information sharing of the US-Japan alliance by helping integrate Japanese missile defense system into the US-North American system. An effective TMD system will greatly increase the overall capability of the US-Japan alliance and thus, its potential to intervene in regional conflicts. The revision of the US-Japan alliance guidelines in the late 1990s has already moved the US-Japan alliance beyond a simple military alliance to provide logistics assistance to the US troops that become involved in "contingency in the areas surrounding Japan," although neither country has made the clear view of such a "contingency" and the legal basis for Japanese active participation in military action for all purposes in the areas surrounding Japan — for example, a conflict on the Korean Peninsula — Japan might be reluctant to join in the US military intervention partly because of its vulnerabilities to possible WMD retaliations.

The United States and Japan, perhaps to a lesser extent, into a military conflict with China. China's grave concern over the redefined US-Japan security alliance is also largely driven by the deliberately ambiguous attitudes of the US and Japan towards China. Though reluctant to define the geographic coverage or scope of the new defense guideline in an explicit way, neither the US nor Japan rule out the possibility that they would consider "areas surrounding Japan" as a potential theater for US-Japan military actions, including missile defense. China is concerned that such redefined US-Japan security alliance poses a serious threat to regional stability and security, ironically that which TMD is supposed to achieve. The joint TMD program between the US and Japan adds new salt to that suspicion.

Some Chinese do worry that the real intention of TMD behind the scene may be China. Latest development in Northeast Asia deepens that fear further. The DPRK declared a moratorium on missile test in December last year, which was a clear indication of the North Korea's intention to move towards an advanced TMD. The DPRK's missile test is a clear indication of its intention to develop an advanced TMD system. Also, the US-Japan alliance, as China regards it, may be the part of the same broader strategic picture. It is true that a sophisticated TMD does not exist now and there're still some uncertainties over its technological feasibility. However, the potential is out there; and the mistrust and suspicions of China are not unfounded. The DPRK's missile test is a clear indication of its intention to develop an advanced TMD system.

The TMD program has been encouraging Japan to engage in overseas military actions more actively through the realignment of the alliance. Now with the joint TMD program with the US, Japan is not only going to spend more on its military, its capabilities in early warning, intelligence collection and rapid response of military action will also be greatly enhanced. However, it is not known how far the US and Japan will go in this military cooperation. As a result, it is possible that Japan may become an active participant in military conflict with China. China is concerned that the US-Japan alliance will move from a symbolic one to a more concrete one. Such a development might strengthen the US-Japan alliance and pose a serious constitutional and political problem for Japan if the US and Japan opt for a TMD system with boost-phase interceptors. Actually we have already witnessed some repercussions of TMD on the diplomatic relationships between the US and Japan. Despite the fact that it is within the framework of the US-Japan alliance, the Japan-US joint statement in 1995 to provide logistics assistance to the US troops that become involved in "contingency in the areas surrounding Japan,

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However, a serious strategic dialogue does exist between the three - that is, China has a very limited strategic deterrent capabilities. With that very limited strategic capabilities, China fears secure while it does not...