TMD AND US-CHINA-JAPAN COOPERATION

Recommended Citation

Wang Chun, "TMD AND US-CHINA-JAPAN COOPERATION", Projects, June 23, 2001, https://nautilus.org/projects/tmd-and-us-china-japan-cooperation/

The TMD joint development by the United States and Japan now stands out as a most prominent sticking point in East Asian security in the wake of Japan's September 1999 agreement with the United States on TMD joint development. Some argue that it is a stabilizer, whereas many more argue that it destabilizes, not only constraining the relationship among the major powers in Asia, but also affecting the region, especially the East Asian security. I am grateful to the Nautilus Institute and the United Nations University in Tokyo for sponsoring this workshop and giving me the opportunity to share my personal views with our colleagues from the US and Japan on this issue. I hope that such exchanges will help all interested parties towards a better understanding on each other's concerns. I will, on a personal basis, first zero in on the strategic goals of the US and Japan in their TMD joint development endeavor before looking into its implications on various fronts. In conclusion, I will try to come up with some prescriptions on this issue.

I. The Strategic Goals of the US and Japan in their TMD Joint Development

"Should there be no launching by DPRK in August 1998, would the United States and Japan be still so persistent in the pursuit of their TMD joint development program?" This is, actually, a question frequently addressed to me as the United States and Japan are pressing rapidly ahead in their TMD joint development endeavor. My answer is positive. The rationale behind can be pretty simple. The people even with basic common sense will come to see that the DPRK, in terms of both its intention and capability, is simply not in a position, at least in the foreseeable future, to constitute a threat to the territory of either United States or Japan. The excuse employed by the US and Japan is untenable. The persistent pursuit of a TMD joint development program in the wake of the DPRK's recent agreement on a moratorium on testing long- range missiles is a strong case, attesting to this very point.

There are, in fact, complicated and profound political, diplomatic and military considerations behind the US and Japan in their TMD joint development endeavor. The main strategic goal of the United States, as I see it, is to establish its unchangeable strategic deterrence and superiority in Asia with TMD as an effective military means, and subsequently reinforce its diplomatic policies so as to guard against any potential developments on the front of security in the region that might be at odds with the will and interests of the US. Japan, for its part, has in effect approached its joint development program with the strategic goal of substantially enhancing its overall military strength and, on this basis, aggrandizes its political position at the international stage.(1)

So, in pursuing the above strategic goals, both the United States and Japan are virtually basing themselves on a wrong perception of security, a perception characterized by cold war mentality.

II. Implications of the US-Japan TMD Joint Program

The TMD joint development by the United States and Japan is, in fact, not a stabilizing factor in promotion of East Asian security, but rather a destabilizing factor, affecting regional and even global security with multi- fold implications.

Firstly, the sophisticated TMD systems, especially NTW currently under the joint development by the United States and Japan, given its inherent strategic capability, once deployed in East Asia, will undoubtedly serve as an indispensable link within US NMD. Under such circumstances, the above TMD systems will have the same severe negative impacts as those of NMD on both global and regional security.

Secondly, the sophisticated TMD systems under joint development by the US and Japan, if deployed, will contribute to wrecking the existing security landscape in East Asia. This will undoubtedly tip the current tenuous strategic balance in East Asia. Moreover, given the "revolutionary" nature of such sophisticated military systems, other countries will have to come up with corresponding adjustments to their own military strategies. As a result, a spiral arms race in the region may be triggered.

Thirdly, the sophisticated TMD systems currently under joint development by the US and Japan, if deployed in East Asia, will drastically enhance the overall offensive-defensive capability of the US-Japan military alliance, far exceeding the level they maintained during the cold war era, as such sophisticated systems, given their strategic capability, can help push the US NMD to the very forefront in East Asia, and enable the United States to greatly enhance its capability of military involvement in regional security issues as a result of its rapid military penetration and projection, thus constituting a direct threat to surrounding countries in the region.

Fourthly, TMD joint development by the United States and Japan will help Japan pick up its pace in its endeavor to embark on the course of re- militarization. Japan's defense budget currently ranks only the second in the world,(2) with overwhelming ground, naval and air forces. In September 1997, Japan and the United States signed their amended Defense Cooperation Guidelines.(3) In May 1999, the Japanese Diet reviewed and subsequently endorsed the bill concerning "situation in the areas surrounding Japan", which expand its defense area to "areas surrounding Japan". Moreover, some politicians in Japan have, from time to time, called for changes in Japan's military strategy, i.e. from a strategy of "defense confined to its own territory and coastal waters" to a "preemptive" one.(4) And some even went so far as to call for amendments to Japan's Peace Constitution.(5) So, US-Japan cooperation on TMD can only contribute the resurgence of Japan's militarism.

Fifthly, TMD joint development by the United States and Japan will give rise to mounting misgivings and mistrust among the major powers in the region, especially China and Russia, and subsequently erode the basis of their cooperation in the regional context, thus making it difficult to foster a sound and enabling security environment in the region.

Sixthly, the US-Japan cooperation on TMD will not be conducive to relaxing the tensions on the Korean Peninsular, in particular the resolution of the Korean nuclear and missile crises. The emerging positive developments, from another perspective, point to the very fact that the excuses employed by the US and Japan to develop TMD in East Asia is untenable. If they are bent on their own way and continue to pursue TMD, it will affect the momentum being gained in the wake of the recent rapprochement between DPRK and ROK. As a result, any resolution to the above crisis will remain elusive.

Seventhly, the US-Japan cooperation on TMD will not help prevent the proliferation of missiles; on the contrary, such cooperation can only multiply the risk of the proliferation of missile technologies and render MTCR ineffective, given that technologies for both offensive missiles and missile defenses are mutually convertible, and many technologies for missile defenses can be used and adapted to develop and improve the technologies for offensive missiles. In fact, many TMD systems, even in the case of such a low-tier TMD as PAC-III, are subject to the control of the MTCR as Category II items. So, US- Japan cooperation on TMD is, in fact, very much at odds with the non-proliferation purpose the United States has advocated.

Lastly, the deployment of sophisticated TMD systems in East Asia will constitute a direct grave threat to China's national security interest. According to the information made available by the US side, NTW, for instance, is an upper-tier TMD system inherently capable of intercepting ICBMs even in the ascent/boost phase.(6) The NTW system, given its velocity, is capable of penetrating 800 to 1000 km inside China, thus directly threatening the safety of China's coastal provinces. The Chinese have naturally registered their grave concerns and strong opposition.

III. The Taiwan Question in Asia-Pacific

TMD Architectures

TMD relating to Taiwan represents a special concern to China, as it involves not only China's sovereignty but its national security interests as well.

Our concerns on this score are actually two-fold. One is the American factor, i.e. the direct provision by the US to Taiwan of TMD systems, equipment, technologies, services or other assistance. Another is mainly the Japanese factor, i.e. the potential incorporation of Taiwan into the US-Japan TMD protection umbrella.

Neither scenario is acceptable to China, because both scenarios constitute not only an act of interference in China's internal affairs on the part of the US and Japan, but also a major shift in the latter's policy towards China. Given the nature of TMD systems, especially with the involvement of early warning information, the provision of assistance to Taiwan, particularly in a case of Taiwan contingency, is virtually tantamount to restoring "something" in a nature of a quasi- military alliance between the US and Taiwan. This will give rise to serious political and military consequences.

So, if the US and Japan are to provide Taiwan with TMD, no matter in what form, or to incorporate Taiwan into their TMD protection umbrella, it will not only shake the basis of China's relations with the US and Japan with destructive impacts, but also inject new destabilizing factors into the regional security environment.

China, for its part, is resolutely opposed to the above attempts. China has no room whatsoever for any compromise on this issue. This is a red hot line. Untouchable.

IV. Prescriptions

TMD based on unilateral military advantages is not a relevant answer to addressing the threat flowing from missile development and missile proliferation. The following measures merit our reflection:

Firstly, it is essential to do away with the cold war mentality and come up with a correct perception of security in fostering a sound and enabling regional security environment.(7)

Secondly, it is fundamental, in addressing security problems, to face squarely and respect the

legitimate security interests and concerns of all relevant countries and to ensure the undiminished security for all. This represents two important principles if the problems are to be put behind us. It would be undesirable if one seeks its own unilateral security at the expense of others. Security issues can only be addressed in the context of cooperative and collective security through enhanced dialogue and cooperation.

Thirdly, given that the relations among major powers always constitute a main axis on regional security issues, it is therefore essential to enhance their coordination on the basis of dialogue and cooperation among all relevant countries. Such a "power concert" will help remove the mounting misgivings and mistrust among major powers and subsequently propel the advancement of cooperation in promotion of solutions to the relevant issues. In the absence of a healthy relationship among major powers, a sound, stable and enabling regional security environment will be impossible.

Fourthly, it is necessary to do away with any TMD cooperation based on military alliance in which the enhancement of the alliance's overall offensive-defensive capability is the objective.

Fifthly, there must be a ban on the development and deployment of all TMD systems with inherent strategic capability. Lastly, it is essential to ensure that Taiwan be excluded from any TMD mechanism. To this end, the United States and Japan should undertake in explicit terms not to provide to Taiwan, in whatever form, any TMD system, equipment, technology, service or other assistance, or to incorporate Taiwan into their TMD protection umbrella.

V. Conclusion

With the above in view, I am of the view that the excuse employed by the United States and Japan in pursuing their TMD joint development program is untenable. TMD is not a relevant answer to threats flowing from missile development and missile proliferation; on the contrary, it can only constrain the relations of major powers, increase their mistrust and thus impede their cooperation with profound and far-reaching negative impacts on regional peace, security and stability. A correct perception of security, coupled with coordination among major powers and enhanced dialogue and cooperation among all relevant countries in accordance with the principle of undiminished security for all, is of utmost importance if the regional security issues are to be put behind us.

---

(1) "Can BMD Really Enhance Security?" Statement by Mr. Sha Zukang, at 2nd China-US Conference on Arms Control and Non-proliferation, 28 April, 1999, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/english/dhtml/read.asp?forefather=002&pkey=19991 2280853 1
(2) Sipri Year Book 1999, Chapter 7 Military Expenditure, table 7A 3
(3) "Issue of Japanese-American Security Cooperation", http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/en.../read.asp?forefather=003&peky=1999123009492
(4) See news coverage of Central News Agency, Taiwan, 5 March, 1999
(5) "New Ambitions, Old Obstacles: Japan And Its Search for an Arms Control Strategy", Michael J. Creen and Katsuhisa Furukawa, Arms Control Today, July/August 2000, pp17
(6) see BMDO report on theater missile defense
(7) "Promote Disarmament Process and Safeguard World Security", Address at the Conference on Disarmament by Jiang Zemin, President of the People's Republic of China, 26 March 1999, Geneva, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/english/dhtml/read.asp?forefather=002&pkey=19991 2280855 230

View this online at: https://nautilus.org/projects/tmd-and-us-china-japan-cooperation/

Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org