NMD, TMD, Arms Control

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NMD, TDMD, Arms Control by GU Guoliang

After the end of the Cold War, the United States became the only superpower in the world. While the international situation as a whole is relaxing, the United States, which possesses the world’s most powerful nuclear and conventional forces, is claiming that it is now facing more serious and challenging threats from multiple directions. This has been directly responsible for the states of conflict, competition, and confrontation in the Asia-Pacific region, and the occurrence of war across the Asia-Pacific. Moreover, the United States made a decision in 1999 to accelerate its development of both National Missile Defense (NMD) and Theater Missile Defense (TMD) systems to defend the entire United States territory, its forward deployed troops, and its allies against missile attacks. This reflects the changing US arms control and nonproliferation policies as well as its intentions to achieve its strategic military objectives. The purpose is to maintain the existing global and regional strategic balance, strengthen the United States’ military superiority, achieve an absolute US military superiority in both offensive and defensive capabilities, further enlarge the existing disparity between the United States and other countries. This will have a direct impact on arms races and undermine the trust among the major powers. Russia, China, and even the United States’ European allies have expressed their opposition against and concern about US development of NMD. China and other Asian countries have also shown their concern about the effects of US TMD development on the Asia-Pacific region.

In the United States, the issues of NMD and TMD have brought about heated debates on whether the idea of arms control is outdated and whether arms control will have a future. The United States’ European allies have expressed their opposition against and concern about US development of NMD. China and other Asian countries have also shown their concern about the effects of US TMD development on the Asia-Pacific region.

US severe military build-up and unilateral military intervention than the bilateral arms control treaties and international nonproliferation cooperation. The failure of the US Congress to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) last October, and the US attempt to modify and even threaten to abandon the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty to pave the way for its NMD and TMD programs, reflect this tendency toward unilateralism. US advocates believe that the United States can now have both the financial and technological capability to develop and deploy advanced missile defense systems in the Asia-Pacific region. Russia or other countries because they cannot afford to have an arms race with the United States. They argue that international arms control treaties cannot be effectively verified and can only pose a threat to US maintenance of its military superiority. Because the US arms control and nonproliferation policy is in disarray, many scholars both inside and outside of the United States have real concerns about the future of international arms control.

The development of NMD and TMD also reflects a growing tendency in the United States toward unilateralism. The Republican dominated congress and some right-wing forces place more emphasis on US military build-up and unilateral military intervention than the bilateral arms control treaties and international nonproliferation cooperation. The failure of the US Congress to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) last October, and the US attempt to modify and even threaten to abandon the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty to pave the way for its NMD and TMD programs, reflect this tendency toward unilateralism. US advocates believe that the United States can now have both the financial and technological capability to develop and deploy advanced missile defense systems in the Asia-Pacific region.

The US development and deployment of a TMD system in Asia will upset the regional military balance and undermine stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The TMD system is not only a part of the US strategic nuclear posture, but is also a part of its regional deterrence strategy. Joint TMD development between the United States and Japan also constitutes proliferation of missile technologies in the region. The deployment of TMD could only worsen the security situation in Northeast Asia. That is why South Korea has refused the offer of joint TMD development with the United States. On the contrary, South Korea and Japan have signed a joint cooperation plan in the field of TMD development.

The US development and deployment of TMD has also increased international concerns about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The US rejection of CTBT ratification and its attempt to modify the ABM treaty have weakened the international consensus on the role of arms control and nonproliferation. The United States is pursuing a new arms control and nonproliferation policy, and the new US arms control policies have also affected the relations of the major powers, US-China relations, and US-Japan relations in particular. US NMD and TMD development has also undermined their cooperation in the field of arms control and nonproliferation. US NMD and TMD programs run counter to the objectives of arms control, challenge traditional arms controls theories, and cast doubt on the future of the major powers, US-China relations, and US-Japan relations in particular. US NMD and TMD development has also undermined their cooperation in the field of arms control and nonproliferation.

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