

## Report 45

### Missile Defense and Asian Security

*By Michael Krepon*

**Presented to the Stimson/CNA NMD-China Project on, February 20, 2002**

#### INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, Europe was the region most likely to be affected—for better or for worse—by U.S. missile defense deployments.<sup>1</sup> Now Asia has replaced Europe as the region most likely to be roiled by such deployments. Beijing and Islamabad are unequivocally opposed to any national missile defense deployments.<sup>2</sup> New Delhi sees missile defenses in a mixed light, attracted by the possibility of technology and military transfers from the United States as well as constraints on China, but wary of the impulse U.S. deployments could impart to Chinese missile programs. Chinese countermeasures are likely to bring Indian reactions that, in turn, stir Pakistan in a cascading effect.

Reactions to missile defense in northeastern Asia are similarly mixed. Taiwan appears to have few, if any, reservations about U.S. missile defense plans, viewing prospective deployments—especially of TMD—as an opportunity to reconnect with the U.S. military and as a counter to China’s missile build-up. China, meanwhile, continues to warn against U.S. efforts to obtain defensive as well as offensive strategic superiority and against any missile defense collaboration between Washington and Taipei. Tokyo’s sentiments are divided: on one hand, worried about North Korea’s missile threat while, on the other, anxious that a U.S. policy isolating the DPRK will endanger regional security. Concern about a U.S.-China clash and Beijing’s growing missile arsenal also contributes to Tokyo’s ambivalence. South Korea supports a U.S. missile shield. Like Tokyo, however, Seoul also is concerned by Pyongyang’s reactions to missile defense and other U.S. actions focused at North Korea. President Bush’s inclusion of

---

<sup>1</sup> The focus of this paper is on what has been called “National Missile Defense” (NMD) rather than Theater Missile Defense (TMD). Although the Bush Administration has sought to elide those into a single, layered missile defense concept, for the purposes of this analysis, the distinction is still meaningful. When we have reference to TMD, we will so label it; otherwise “missile defense” will refer to NMD systems.

the DPRK as part of the "evil axis" raises similar concern that isolating the DPRK only encourages its reversion to protracted and destabilizing confrontation with the South, Japan and the U.S. Despite Pyongyang's recent willingness to reengage on obtaining light-water reactors through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), talks on ending North Korea's missile program remain frozen.

## **UNSTABLE TRIANGLE IN SOUTH ASIA...**

China, India and Pakistan all have near-term, growing nuclear potential. Moreover, they do not appear to have fixed requirements for nuclear deterrence. In this fluid, early phase of modernizing their nuclear capabilities, all three could increase their unstated requirements in response to U.S. national missile defense deployments, while ostensibly maintaining allegiance to "minimal" nuclear deterrence postures. Consequently, a very real potential exists in southern Asia for the acceleration of a nuclear cascade resulting from U.S. missile defense deployments. Cascade effects could generate further growth in nuclear stockpiles, exacerbate spikes in regional tensions, and precipitate some deployments of missile defenses within the region.

China, India and Pakistan are enmeshed in a three-cornered interaction from which there is no easy exit. Their close proximity magnifies nuclear- and missile-related message sending, and those messages are likely to reverberate beyond the confines of southern Asia. Prospective U.S. missile defense deployments will undoubtedly compound these tympanum effects.

Southern Asia presents a far more complex model than that between the U.S. and USSR during the Cold War that allowed strategic stability to develop. Leaders in Beijing, New Delhi and Islamabad all say that minimum deterrence will serve as their guide, and that they will avoid the competitive drives leading to ever-larger nuclear arsenals. But national leaders in all three capitals have also said that deterrence is not a static concept. The requirements of each state will depend, in some measure, on what the others are doing or might seek to do.

---

<sup>2</sup> Beijing is also, of course, extremely sensitive to any TMD deployments covering Taiwan.

Accepting—let alone codifying—a hierarchical, triangular relationship will be extraordinarily difficult for these proud nations. No two sides of the triangle in southern Asia are equal, and within the triangle, there are two competing dyads. In geometrical terms, there is nothing inherently stable about a triangle consisting of three unequal sides. Different sides of the triangle jockey over disputed borders, engage in a deadly dispute in Kashmir, worry about Islamic extremism and anticipate a competition between “blue water” navies. Nuclear weapons and missile programs now overlay these neuralgic issues, making it harder for national leaders in China, India and Pakistan to create and sustain a stable strategic environment.

Scant progress has been made on this agenda over the last decade. Beijing and New Delhi have begun a strategic dialogue, but their interactions on nuclear matters have initially dwelled on China’s displeasure at being obliquely named as a reason for India’s nuclear tests in 1998, and New Delhi’s concerns over China’s support for Pakistan’s nuclear and missile capabilities. China has been reluctant to discuss mechanisms to stabilize the Sino-Indian nuclear relationship in a context that presumes numerical equality.

South Asia’s roller coaster ride has provided little time or space to negotiate and implement stabilizing measures like those employed by Washington and Moscow to stabilize their Cold War pursuits. The prospective deployment of ballistic missile defenses by the United States therefore can only complicate the nuclear risk reduction agenda in southern Asia. Leaders in China, India, and Pakistan have the better part of a decade before national and advanced theater missile defenses<sup>3</sup> are deployed to take serious steps to reduce negative consequences and nuclear risks. The sooner they attend to this task, the better. In the meantime, Washington must also attend to the downside risks and unintended consequences in Asia of deploying missile defenses.

---

<sup>3</sup> Advanced TMD systems that could be deployed in South Asia or China might be those available or under development in Russia, Israel and even the U.S. and would be potentially as destabilizing as NMD deployments.

### **...CAN LEAD TO CASCADE EFFECTS**

Beijing's calculations of nuclear sufficiency will reverberate in New Delhi, and India's recalibrated nuclear requirements will reverberate in Islamabad. At the top of this cascade, Beijing's calculations will be affected by U.S. deployments of national and advanced theater missile defenses. Whatever additional requirements Beijing feels are warranted to counter U.S. missile defense programs—even if they are to be relatively inconsequential in terms of the U.S.-China nuclear equation—could be compelling on the Subcontinent. The potential for cascading nuclear requirements would exist, however, even in the absence of U.S. missile defense programs, since China's military and strategic modernization programs have other drivers.

Pakistani leaders have reacted quite negatively to prospective missile defenses, not simply in support of Beijing, but also out of concern that New Delhi will eventually deploy its own defenses, possibly negating Islamabad's investment in medium-range missiles. And this concern has grown as New Delhi's diplomatic posture toward missile defenses has shifted from negative to neutral to forward leaning.

Pakistan's confidence in the survivability of its nuclear deterrent is likely to degrade in crisis situations, given the small number of locations in which Pakistan's nuclear deterrent resides and the quick reach of Indian strike forces. Consequently, there are strong incentives for Pakistani military leaders to increase the readiness of their nuclear deterrent in periods of mounting tension, with attendant spikes in nuclear danger. The potential for accidents and miscalculations in South Asia grow considerably when missiles and combat aircraft are placed on heightened alert. Any pursuit by India of missile defenses would increase this hair-trigger effect, evident in the ongoing dispute over Kashmir.

Early in the Clinton administration, when ties were strained, Indian diplomats derided missile defenses as yet another ill-conceived strategic initiative by an insular and unilateralist Washington. With the substantial improvement in Indo-U.S. ties at the end of the Clinton administration, New Delhi's public criticism toward missile defenses was greatly muted, while Indian officials privately contemplated bilateral cooperation in this sphere. Subsequently, New Delhi's official response to President George W. Bush's pronouncements on strategic policy was far more appreciative than reactions emanating from European Capitals.

New Delhi's nuclear choices are different from those driving Beijing, but they are no less susceptible to reverberations generated from missile defense deployments. India's nuclear requirements flow from two colluding nuclear neighbors, considerations of status and domestic politics, and the prompting of a well-connected "strategic enclave."

There was an absence of official Indian government statements regarding the requirements of nuclear deterrence, not unwelcome to foreign governments that prefer ambiguity to firmly stated, ambitious estimates of India's nuclear needs. Filling this vacuum were Indian strategic analysts who offered their own unofficial estimates of the requirements of deterrence. These unofficial assessments, together with a 1999 Indian National Security Advisory Board report, suggest some clues as to how the Indian government might translate minimum nuclear deterrence into numbers—at least in the absence of cascade effects. The community of strategic commentators in India that pushed for an overt nuclear capability, and others who have joined them since the 1998 blasts mostly translate the requirements of nuclear deterrence and great power status into a thermonuclear weapons capability and a three digit-sized force of nuclear weapons.

The leaders of China, India and Pakistan all have expressed their clear intent to avoid nuclear excess. However, none is inclined to establish fixed requirements for minimal nuclear deterrence, given the strategic uncertainties they face. While China, India and Pakistan will retain a strong interest in holding down nuclear force levels, all have implied or explicitly stated that "minimal" is a relative term, depending on the evolution of external threats.

Relativism and minimalism are different concepts that are difficult to reconcile for force sizing purposes. Fixing nuclear requirements in relative rather than minimal terms would constitute a dramatic shift for China, which was, by far, the most relaxed nuclear weapon state during the Cold War. And if Beijing ratchets up its capabilities, domestic pressures and interest groups within India will push in a similar direction. Pakistan has the infrastructure to stay within earshot of India, as long as nuclear and missile programs remain high budgetary priorities. The more Pakistan's military falls behind Indian conventional capabilities, the more it will be tempted to rely on nuclear weapons as an "equalizer." Thus, there could be a bottom-up push to escalate nuclear capabilities, as well as a top-down pull. U.S. missile defense deployment decisions can either depress or accelerate these calculations.

## MISSILE DEFENSE AND TAIWAN

Notwithstanding improving Sino-U.S. relations in the wake of September 11, the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland remains a top national priority for China's leadership and the most likely focus of conflict between the U.S. and China. Since recognizing the People's Republic of China as the "sole legitimate government of China," U.S. policy on Taiwan has been carefully nuanced to allow constructive relations with the mainland while encouraging peaceful rapprochement between Taipei and Beijing.<sup>4</sup> However, since Taiwan's domestic political opening in the 1980's, the gradual decline of the KMT and the rise of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, the island gradually but steadily has moved on a more separatist path. This has led to increasing tensions in the Taiwan Strait with an accompanying and continuing PLA military buildup that in turn has brought pressure on the U.S. government to assist in updating Taiwan's defenses. The result is a dangerously escalatory three-sided dynamic.

Missile defense figures as an important factor in Taiwan's future security. While the effectiveness of theater missile defenses against mainland attacks remains questionable, few debate the potential psychological and political benefits to the island. Taiwan's ruling DPP leadership has made the development of theater defenses a high priority in response to public outcry over the island's vulnerability in the wake of the mainland's missile "tests" off Taiwan's coasts. The ideal scenario from Taipei's standpoint would be a collaborative venture with the U.S. that would both facilitate the development of theater missile defense technologies and a strengthening of military links with the U.S. U.S. deployment of national missile defense would also presumably be welcomed by Taipei as easing any U.S. decision to come to Taiwan's aid without fear of nuclear retaliation from the mainland.

Beijing has repeatedly warned that any provision of upper tier, or even more sophisticated lower-tier theater missile defense systems to Taiwan or linking of the U.S. and Taiwan militaries would violate Chinese sovereignty over the island and have the "gravest repercussions." Washington has thus far refrained from crossing the threshold of providing Taiwan these more sophisticated missile defense technologies. But while the U.S. has not entered into collaborative arrangements with Taiwan on missile defenses nor acceded to repeated requests for PAC-3 and Aegis-class missile frigates, it has not ruled out the possibility of eventual sales. In the wake of the U.S. approval of the sale of submarines to Taiwan

---

<sup>4</sup> China's agreement to the U.S. initiative to normalize relations—and the ensuing peace that this brought to the Asia-Pacific region—was in large part founded on a U.S. acknowledgment (though not acceptance) of the mainland's sovereignty claim over the island. At the time, both the PRC and ROC were in agreement that Taiwan was a part of China (the disagreement was over which side was the legitimate government), facilitating the normalization deal.

(not yet delivered and still the object of strong opposition from China), moves to provide the island with these missile defense technologies would be especially provocative from Beijing's viewpoint.

China also is concerned that its small and antiquated strategic deterrent, if captured by a U.S. missile shield, would return Beijing to the days when it was vulnerable to American and Russian "nuclear blackmail."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, Beijing's vocal opposition to U.S. national missile defense programs stems not only from strategic but tactical concern—the belief that a U.S. shield coupled with already highly advanced conventional capabilities will neutralize China's deterrent, giving the U.S. greater freedom of action in a conflict over Taiwan.

While Washington has sought to assuage China's fears on missile defense and improve relations with two presidential visits to China in the first thirteen months of the Bush Administration, Beijing remains skeptical of Washington's intentions. China holds to the view that America continues to harbor a strategy of containment against China while supporting Taiwan's independent progression. Recent U.S. actions add to Beijing's suspicions. The decision to end the annual USG interagency review of arms sales to Taiwan introduces more flexibility into the interagency approval process for arms sales to the island while lessening transparency. President Bush's approval of submarines and destroyers to Taiwan—the biggest arms package for the island since 1992 when his father authorized the sale of 150 Texas-built F-16 jet fighters—drew strong reactions from Beijing. And the President's momentary parting in April 2001 with the traditional U.S. "strategic ambiguity" over coming to Taiwan's defense in a dust-up with China was also interpreted in Beijing as a significant sign that Washington was taking sides in the Strait and even encouraging Taiwan independence.

Other than constructive dialogue between Beijing and Taipei, which seems out of reach at the moment, probably the biggest factor in reversing this dangerous trend in the Taiwan Strait would be an improvement in the political relations between the U.S. and China. President Bush's offer of high-level strategic talks with China, including discussions on missile defenses, is a step in the right direction although it is unclear what new approaches, if any, will be deployed to lessen China's anxieties. In Washington, while there is greater recognition of the need to consult with Beijing on missile defenses, the complexities of managing disparate policy tracks remain. Decisions on Taiwan arms sales, missile defense and even visits or transits of Taiwan leaders to the United States require careful management to avoid exacerbating an already tense cross-Strait environment.

---

<sup>5</sup> The threat of U.S. nuclear weapons tempered PRC calculations during skirmishes with the ROC over the Taiwan-controlled Quemoy and Matsu islands five decades ago as it arguably did during the Korean War.

## THE KOREAN PENINSULA

In his January 29<sup>th</sup> State of the Union address, the President's inclusion of North Korea as part of an "evil axis," together with Iraq and Iran, and his reiteration of the North Korean "threat" as a rationale for national missile defense, raised concern in Asian capitals. Tokyo and Seoul, key U.S. allies, grumbled over an unnecessarily provocative public utterance by Washington that could only weaken regional security. And in Beijing, it was yet another sign that further U.S.-PRC collaboration to encourage good behavior of the DPRK—one of the important areas of constructive Sino-U.S. engagement welcomed by regional governments—was perhaps a thing of the past. The new administration's reversal of previous U.S. efforts to engage North Korea brought expected results. Pyongyang stepped away from diplomatic processes that some believe came close to a breakthrough on stopping North Korea's missile program before the 2000 U.S. presidential election. North-South rapprochement also was put on ice to the consternation of Kim Dae Jung's government.

There were similar reactions within U.S. policy circles. The U.S. security stake in Korea remains extraordinarily high. Though the Korean War is a distant memory for most Americans who view the DMZ a relic of the Cold War, today more than a half million North Korean troops remain massed across the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. Nowhere else in the world are so many (37,000) U.S. troops concentrated in continual wartime readiness. The potential for a devastating strike by Pyongyang across the DMZ and missile attacks against Japan is real and ominous. Equally serious to U.S. security interests is North Korea's capacity to develop, produce and export WMD and long-range missiles. In this context, the June 2000 North-South Korean summit and subsequent developments were significant, "revolutionary" in the eyes of many South Koreans, as were U.S.-DPRK talks to end Pyongyang's missile and WMD threat.

The question for U.S. policymakers now is how to reengage North Korea on its missile development program. Although Pyongyang has signaled willingness to resume talks on obtaining light water reactors under Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) auspices<sup>6</sup> and to consider resumption of humanitarian family visits with South Korea, U.S.-DPRK missile talks remain on hold. North Korea's test launch of a Taepodong missile in August 1998 handed missile defense advocates in the U.S. and Japan a convincing rationale. Yet over the next two years, Pyongyang demonstrated

---

<sup>6</sup> In exchange for the DPRK freezing and eventually dismantling its graphite-moderated nuclear reactors, KEDO is to provide for: 1) the financing and supply of a light-water reactor (LWR) project in the DPRK consisting of two reactors with a capacity of approximately 1,000 megawatts each, 2) the supply of interim energy alternatives (oil) pending construction of the first light-water reactor unit; and 3) the implementation of any other measures deemed necessary to carry out the objective of the Agreed Framework.

willingness to table its missile program as a bargaining chip in talks with the U.S. aimed at normalizing relations. Though the missile launch provoked strong reactions in Tokyo, Seoul and Washington, the governments of Japan and South Korea supported subsequent U.S. diplomatic efforts to induce North Korea to end its missile program. In mid-2001, Pyongyang signaled its impatience by conducting a static Taepodong-1 engine test. The North nevertheless extended its unilateral moratorium on long-range missile launches from 2002 to 2003 when Swedish Prime Minister Persson met with Kim Jong Il in May 2001.

There are other signs of DPRK restiveness. Anti-U.S./ROK/Japan diatribes broadcast by DPRK state-controlled media have become more pronounced in the wake of the "Axis of Evil" speech. Provocative military actions such as the building of anti-tank defenses near the DMZ and the incursion of a suspected North Korean drug smuggler into Japanese waters are again back in the news, reminiscent of the days where such incidents fed a dangerous cycle of confrontation and tension. Obviously, efforts to stem any resumed clandestine effort by the DPRK to produce nuclear and other WMD also become less viable if tensions between Washington and Pyongyang continue to rise.

Although South Korea had sought to partner and cost-share with the U.S. in developing a missile shield, political changes in Seoul together with the lingering economic weakness caused by the Asian financial crisis brought a reversal. Not partnering also avoided a potentially nasty irritant in what were then warming North-South relations. Finally, practicality weighed in the minds of ROK leaders, as the main threat across the DMZ remains North Korean artillery and SCUDS, not longer-range missiles.

Building an offensive missile capability to match the North remains a priority of the ROK military despite U.S. efforts to restrain this impulse. A resumption of efforts by the North to develop and deploy missiles, including in response to U.S. missile defenses, would only spur the South to step up indigenous missile development programs. South Korea has maintained its missile testing program and announced plans to launch its first satellite in 2005. In this scenario, there also could be greater domestic pressure in Japan for a militarization of its missile and space programs and more collaboration with the U.S. on missile defenses. These developments, as in the case of South Asia, would stimulate a cascade effect, drawing concern and reaction from China.

Finally, it would be an underestimation of Korean national aspirations to believe that North-South rapprochement would be an acceptable casualty in South Korea of a tougher U.S. approach to North Korea. South Korean desire for humanitarian exchanges remains urgent and strong and sentiment for ultimate peaceful reunification runs deep. U.S. policy decisions seen as obstructing or keeping the two

Koreas apart in perpetuity are almost certain to be corrosive to U.S.-ROK relations and to the future of the alliance.

## **JAPANESE AMBIVALENCE**

Tokyo's sentiments are mixed: on one hand, Japan is worried about North Korea's missile threat and Beijing's growing missile arsenal. On the other, it is concerned about a U.S.-China clash and not wanting to be enmeshed in unwise U.S. policies as well as about not being properly defended by Washington.

To complicate things further, the regional effects of U.S. missile defense deployments are invariably crosscutting and resistant to harmonization. Deployments that soothe Japanese concerns can rub Chinese sensibilities raw. Conversely, voluntary restraint by Washington in the face of Chinese or North Korean missile threats can be as unsettling to Japan as ill-conceived complacency. And whatever choice is agreed upon by Washington and Tokyo will likely raise sensitive constitutional, civil-military and "burden sharing" questions in Japan and stir regional reactions, particularly from China and even the ROK.

Japanese sensitivity remains high over the need for prior consultations before Washington announces policy changes that can affect Japan's security. The U.S. decision to end distinctions between theater and national missile defense systems was at best an insensitive move from Tokyo's perspective. Article 9 of Japan's constitution prohibiting collective defense has stirred much domestic debate about the degree in which Japan can participate in a U.S. missile defense program. While there is prevailing acceptance of a Japanese role in joint research with the U.S. of theater missile defense systems that could eventually be "indigenized" by Japan, being a part of a U.S. national missile defense system is another story.

Displeasure over U.S. pronouncements on national missile defense and the ABM Treaty brought cool public reactions from Tokyo. Both Prime Minister Koizumi and then-Foreign Minister Tanaka made statements that Japan had "its own thinking" on missile defenses not necessarily in sync with that of Washington. While Japan "understood" Washington's rationale for a more robust and transcendent system, this did not imply Tokyo's agreement. Subsequent consultations with the Japanese on missile defense have calmed Tokyo, but similar displeasure arose again when the President included the DPRK in the "evil axis" and again pointed to North Korean missiles as a core justification for missile defenses. In

the wake of a suspected North Korean incursion into Japanese waters, Tokyo questions whether the new U.S. approach toward North Korea will be counterproductive to Japan's security interests.

## **THE CHALLENGES AHEAD**

Negative repercussions in Asia resulting from U.S. deployments of national missile defenses are inescapable; Washington's decisions could accelerate or moderate them. The cascade effects of prospective missile defenses have already begun in anticipation of deployments. Hedges in the form of resource allocations, increased missile production rates, and the development of countermeasures are undoubtedly under way.

National leaders in India, China and Pakistan need to find the wisdom to exercise restraint. They also need wise U.S. policy choices, because their own security dilemmas are so complicated. The triangular geometry of regional competition in southern Asia sits unsteadily atop two dyads. In each of the dyads, the stronger of the two antagonists does not outwardly acknowledge its competitor, making formalized nuclear risk reduction extremely difficult. A triangular effort to moderate cascade effects would be plagued by this history, and by the lack of symmetry resulting from three-cornered interactions. Even without the added complications of U.S. missile defenses, formalized bilateral or trilateral arrangements dampening nuclear interactions would be very difficult to negotiate. If India also deploys missile defenses, further complications would arise, especially for Pakistan.

Successful nuclear risk reduction in southern Asia will require finding a unique mixture of transparency and survivability for nuclear capabilities, as well as creative monitoring arrangements that provide reassurance without increased vulnerability. This agenda has barely begun at a time when it can be severely buffeted by prospective U.S. deployments of missile defenses.

Peace in northeast Asia is an achievement maintained over the past five decades by U.S. military presence and diplomatic flexibility. America's willingness to engage with regional states has provided the underpinnings for this long period of stability and prosperity. But the security overlay in the post-Cold War era is beginning to fray as disparate policy actions, including on missile defenses, seemingly tug in contradiction. The absence of adequate consultations with our allies and with China evokes suspicions of Washington's intentions and at worst is stirring an arms race.

Taiwan's move toward separate status, if not formal "independence," and the unwillingness of all sides to actively (and creatively) seek a "peaceful resolution" of the cross-strait dilemma is a dangerous apathy. Any injection of U.S.-Taiwan collaboration on theater missile defense in this situation would work against achieving a peaceful remedy. Operational and political realities also argue for keeping such regional missile defenses under U.S. control and on U.S. warships. Decisions in this area will depend importantly, of course, on what Beijing does regarding its military build-up opposite Taiwan. But at a minimum, the multiple strands of policy regarding Taiwan, from arms sales to visits to missile defense, require high-level attention and coordination by the Administration.

America's war on terrorism has put North Korea on notice that the military might focused against the Taliban can be turned against Kim Jong Il's regime. However, although North Korea is a prime target of U.S. missile defenses, Washington should not foreclose engaging North Korea on ending the North's missile program. The risks and consequences of an attack on North Korea are far different from those of an attack on Afghanistan, and would place great stresses not only on our alliances with Japan and South Korea, but on stability throughout East Asia. A prudent course would be that proposed by former Defense Secretary Perry, who advocated a strong stance toward the DPRK but one that allowed for mutual threat reduction. The absence of such a positive track will leave Pyongyang little choice but to resume its mischief.

The U.S. push for Japanese "reinterpreting or redefining" Article 9 of their constitution is viewed warily by the rest of Asia, still mindful of the threat posed by a militarized Japan in World War II. Chinese and North Korean countermeasures to U.S. missile defense efforts will alarm Japan, strengthening domestic voices that favor Japan's remilitarization. Recognizing and accepting Japan's desire to restrain collaboration with the U.S. on missile defense—and limiting it to theater defenses—would go far in easing Tokyo's concern that the U.S. is asking for too much and unnecessarily provoking Japan's neighbors.

Perturbations in Asia are insufficient reasons for the United States to forego national missile defenses if a modest insurance policy is needed against improbable but devastating missile attacks. However, the prospect of an Asian nuclear and conventional cascade constitutes a strong argument against ambitious NMD proposals to counter the least likely threat to the U.S. homeland.