Matteo Dian

The Chrysanthemum and the Shield.
The Pacific Theater Missile Defense and its consequences on
the Japanese Security Strategy.

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matteo.dian@sumitalia.it
Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane.
Palazzo Strozzi, Piazza Strozzi Firenze. Italy.
Japan is moving along a long-term trajectory to assume a “normal” security role, gradually eroding the self-binding prescriptions that marked its foreign policy identity during the Post War era. Recently, this process has been accelerated by the emergence of new security threats in the East Asian security environment. In the short term, the North Korean nuclear and ballistic program is the most immediate threat for Japan. In the longer term, the Chinese military modernisation and the increasing power projection capacity of the PRC represent the main strategic challenges. As a result of these trends, Japan is moving away from its traditional post war self-restraint and is attempting to craft a more assertive security strategy in response to what it perceives as newfound security realities. The development of the US-Japan Theatre Missile Defence represents a crucial step in this direction.

From the one hand the participation in the Ballistic Missile Defense system represents the *de facto* overcoming of considerable part the legal and political underpinnings that sustained the Japanese “Culture of Antimilitarism”. To the other, it contributes to redefine the Japanese role in the alliance with the United States, enhancing the interoperability of forces and promoting a unified chain of command and control. These developments are likely to encourage Japan to play a role of “hub nation” and active junior partner in the integrated in the US-led military apparatus in East Asia.

East Asia is an increasingly dynamic and turbulent area. The rise of China, the competition for political influence and resources in the South China sea, the tightening of the security relationships between the US and their old (Japan and Taiwan) and new partners (Vietnam) and the ongoing arm race make the region “ripe for rivalry”.1

This paper will explore a central development for the East Asian strategic landscape: the joint edification of the West Pac Theatre Missile Defense, promoted by the United States and Japan. This fact is strategically very relevant since the instauration of the joint shield will probably contribute to foster the security dilemma that is involving Beijing, Tokyo and Washington and to accelerate the technological and military competition in the area. The significance of this issue, however, is not strictly limited to the strategic domain. It has also a fundamental political relevance. The making of the missile shield is accelerating the normalization of the Japanese security strategy, namely the overcoming of the self binding restrictions that constrained Tokyo’s post war behavior and shaped the Japanese security identity.

This paper is divided into five separate sections. The first one shortly reconstructs the historical trajectory of the Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) project in the United States, stressing how the strategic debate and the aim of the system evolved. While the Reagan Administration envisaged a system aimed to provide protection from Soviet strategic missiles, the following Administrations progressively focused on a narrower and more feasible, but equally relevant, purpose: the maintenance and enhancement of the US power projection in distant theaters as the Middle East and East Asia. While the original

SDI was intended to transcend the constraints of bipolarity (deterrence and MAD), the purpose of the present BMD is maintain and reinforce the advantages of unipolarity, namely power projection and the “command of the commons”.

The second section discusses the evolving Japanese perception of security threats. While in the short term, the North Korean nuclear and ballistic program is the most immediate threat for Japan, the Chinese military modernization and the increasing power projection capacity of the PRC represent the main strategic challenges over the longer term.

The third section illustrates the progressive Japanese involvement in the BMD project. Tokyo passed from the mere sympathy and understanding expressed in the Eighties to be declared “the most cooperative partner of the US”.

The fourth section highlights the consequences of this joint project on the Japanese security strategy. The progressive involvement in the BMD is considered in Tokyo as the “engine of change”, given its determinant impact on the evolution of the Japanese strategy and identity. The cooperation with the US on this endeavor induced Japan to abandon or to put seriously in doubt a substantial part of the self binding restrictions that marked its security strategy during the Cold War.

In the last section, I discuss the impact of the system on the progressive decline of the so-called kokusanka (literally indigenization), namely the policy aimed to maintain military and technological self reliance. The demise of kokusanka renders it more dependent and consequently less able to resist to the US pressures to contribute more actively to the provision of security in the region and beyond.

I conclude mentioning the reaction of other relevant actors of the region, such as Russia and China. The Chinese government considers the system particularly threatening. Beijing, indeed, perceives it as an attempt to diminish Chinese nuclear deterrence via à vis Washington and Tokyo as well as a menace towards its anti access strategy in the Taiwan strait.

The historical trajectory of the missile shield.

The public debate over the possibility for the United States to build a “missile shield” started in the early Eighties when President Ronald Reagan launched the Strategic Defense Initiative, also remembered as the “Star Wars” project. The SDI was not the first proposal related to a possible defense system against ballistic attack. The very first proposals were made in the Sixties when the US developed the plan for the “Sentinel system”, that foresaw a ground-based, nuclear-armed interceptor missiles deployed around a number of major urban areas to protect against possible


Soviet attack. Many analysts acknowledged that the protection provided by such a system would have been inadequate because it left the USSR the possibility to saturate the system with several warheads, neutralizing the defense shield and provoking huge damages. In 1969, the Nixon Administration changed the aim of the system (renamed “Safeguard”), from the protection of soft targets to the protection of ICBM sites, in order to reinforce the possibility to retaliate in case of attack. This focus was entirely consistent with the logic of the Mutual Assured Destruction, reinforcing the possibility to deliver a second strike after a possible first attack by the USSR. The issue of missile defense was firstly regulated under the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty signed in 1972. The AMB Treaty played a vital part in controlling the arm race and in shaping the strategy of deterrence during the Cold War and after. It has been considered as the cornerstone of the anti proliferation regime. It placed a strict limit on the ability to construct defenses to counter other’s ballistic missiles, prohibiting the development, testing, and deployment of ABM systems. However, it did not place any limit on the development or the deployment of defenses against shorter range missiles.

Notably, the Reagan Administration proclaimed a shift from the logic of the Mutual Assured Destruction aiming to reach an extensive strategic superiority. In 1983, Reagan announced a new attempt to build a ballistic missile defense system that would shield the US against a full-scale attack from the USSR. Even though the Strategic Defense Initiative never exceeded the R&D phase, Reagan and prominent members of its administration envisioned a global defensive system with sensors and interceptors based on space, sea and land.

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the USSR largely influenced the strategic debate over the BMD. The main aim was no longer protect the US soil and the allies from a full scale Soviet intercontinental attack. Since the early Nineties, indeed, a potential attack form actors who possess only a few missiles and may not be deterred by fear of U.S. retaliation became the main threat to the US security.

Since 1992, the Clinton Administration started again to reconsider the strategic focus of the BMD project. It was realized that the missile threat was remote even if probable in the foreseeable future. At the time, the missile threat was considered more regional than global. It involved US allies in Europe and in Asia more than the US soil. The

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proliferation of short range missiles represented a threat also for US troops deployed in distant theaters and could fundamentally inhibit the US power projection capability and the capacity to intervene military in the Eurasian mainland. The Clinton Administration, as a consequence, decided that the most urgent priority was the realization of a system able to protect the US allies and preserve the power projection capability of the US forces. The new system was turned in a less ambitious but more feasible theatre missile shield. This shift assured a vast political support in the Congress. The First Gulf war had revealed how a limited amount of short and medium range missiles could inflict serious damage to US troops and allies, reducing the impact of the American military and technological supremacy and the increasing cost of eventual interventions. As the secretary of Defense William Cohen lately confirmed, the US needed such a system because emerging missile states might threaten to deter Americans from using their forces on regional conflicts. Therefore, the Clinton Administration choose to separate the forward deployed TMD (Theatre Missile Defense) and a NMD (National Missile Defense) and approved a new legislative framework with the adoption of the Missile Defense Act of 1995. This new framework based on the separation between theater defense and national defense (aimed mainly against accidental fall outs), was consistent with the ABM regime because it did not undermine the strategic and logic underpinning of the MAD and of the limitation regime established in the Seventies. The legal and strategic framework established in 1995, however, was destined to be short lived. In 1998 the Congress established the Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat. The Commission, headed by Donald Rumsfeld, argued that the Clinton Administration had underestimated the danger of nuclear proliferation in Asia and in the Middle East. In 1999, the Congress approved a new Missile Defense Act which called for the deployment of both a National Missile Defense and a forward deployed Theatre Missile Defense “as soon as it will be technically a possible”. The debate was altered once again by the advent new administration. Shortly after the inauguration of its Presidency, George W. Bush argued that the US would “move beyond the constraints” of the international regime established with the ABM Treaty, eventually deploying a sea-land-space system able to protect the US and their allies from the missile threat. The 2002 National Security Strategy stressed the necessity of a transformation of US strategic forces and the need of an rapid adaptation to a post Cold War environment. The

document argued that “the nature of the Cold War threats required from the United States – with our allies and friends – to emphasize deterrence of the enemy’s use of force, producing a grim strategy of mutual assured destruction. With the end of the Cold War, [we moved] from confrontation to cooperation [and] the dividends are evident: an end to the balance of terror [MAD] . . . . [and the possibilities of] missile defence that until recently were inconceivable. [. . .] Traditional concepts of deterrence will not work.”

According to the authors of the NSS 2002, the concept of deterrence that had marked the Cold War era was strictly linked to the rationality of the actors involved in the nuclear competition. The new threatening actors, as terrorist groups and rogue states, were considered non rational and therefore non deterrable. The new international environment was described as unstable and not predicatable. As the consequence, the Bush Administration through the new NSS highlighted the necessity to move away from a strategic equilibrium based on the old concept of deterrence and form the non proliferation regime established since the Seventies. According to this reasoning, the spread of WMD and ballistic programs, especially if associated to “rogue states” represent a threat to the US security interests and, more specifically to what Barry Posen defines as the “command of the commons”. According to Barry Posen, indeed, the mastery of sea, sky and space areas represent the fundamental foundation of the US military primacy. He defined the command of the commons as the key military enabler of the US global position. It allows, indeed, to exploit other sources of power as their economic and military might as well as the one of their allies. At the same time it weakens potential adversaries, restricting the possibility to access military and economic assistance.”

According to this interpretation, the fundamental interest in preserving this kind of technological advantage explains the will to follow the ballistic defense project even if, in the longer term, it could contribute to the demise of the international arms control regime.

In December 2002, the Bush Administration released the National Security Presidential Directive NSPD-23 that determined a new turning point on the adoption of the “missile shield”. It called for the deployment of ground and sea based interceptors and PAC 3 units, proposed the initial establishment of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) and generally reinforced the structure of sea, air and ground systems. Most importantly, the Bush Administration cancelled the distinction TMD and NMD focusing on a single integrated system with a layered defenses, capable of intercepting missiles of any range at every stage of flight (boost, mid-course, and terminal)” Ultimately, Bush declared the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty in 2002.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, it seemed that a possible future Obama Administration could decide at least a deep revision of the BMD project. During the campaign Obama argued, “I will cut tens of billions of dollars in wasteful spending. I will cut investments in unproven missile defense systems. I will not weaponize space. I will


slow our development of future combat systems.” He added that “The Bush Administration has in the past exaggerated missile defense capabilities and rushed deployments for political purposes.” When Barack Obama came in the office in January 2009, most analysts and commentators expected a major policy change on issues as missile defense and more in general about the nuclear posture. The new administration had declared its intention to reinforce the multilateral legal framework, created in the Seventies and the Eighties and to counter the nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and in Asia. The signing of the new START treaty (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) represented a fundamental step for the disarm diplomacy of the Obama Administration. The treaty contributed to the opening of a new and more relaxed relation with Russia and to a relaunch of the non-proliferation agenda. The hearings and the process of ratification of the new START in the Senate, however, alimented the debate over the missile defense and contributed to clarify the position of the Obama Administration on this subject. During the hearings indeed, it emerged quite clearly that the treaty did not entail any reduction or freezing of the BMD project. The State Department officially declared that “The New START Treaty does not constrain the United States from deploying the most effective missile defenses possible, nor does it add any additional cost or inconvenience.” During the hearings it has been sustained that “Relative to the recently expired START treaty, the New START treaty actually reduces constraints on the development of the missile defense program… [Under New START] our targets will no longer be subject to START constraints.” Moreover, the Nuclear Posture Review issued in April 2010 claims that the BMD is considered able to balance the reduction of emphasis on nuclear weapons with an increasing reliance on ballistic defense. The document stresses that “fundamental changes in the international security environment in recent years, including the growth of unrivaled U.S. conventional military capabilities, major improvements in missile defenses, enable

16 Ibidem.
21 Emily Coppel, op. cit.
us to fulfill those objectives at significantly lower nuclear force levels and with reduced reliance on nuclear weapons.”  

The comprehensive position of the Obama Administration had been previously expressed in the first Ballistic Missile Defense Review, issued in January 2010. This document indicated that “The ballistic missile threat is increasing both quantitatively and qualitatively, and is likely to continue to do so over the next decade.” The declared aim of the administration is to create an unfavorable environment for proliferation of WMD, principally eliminating the incentive to create such a capability. The report, moreover, claims that “regional actors such as North Korea and Iran continue to develop long-range missiles that in a foreseeable future will be able to pose a significant threat to the US.”

The documents highlights also that the Administrations does not considers China and Russia as rivals but possible partners to be engaged in a cooperative effort, specially against the threat represented by medium and short range missiles.

The report underlines also the urgency of the regional threats. It states that the US are keen to “protect and enable to protect themselves” their allies and their troops deployed in these theatres.

Altogether, the Obama Administration did not make any radical strategic or political shift about the BMD policy. Firstly, the new “anti proliferation agenda” promoted by the Obama administration did not have any significant impact on the BMD. The START did not implied any cut or obstacle on the BMD program. On the contrary, the new legal discipline allows an increased room of maneuver for the deployment of the system. Moreover, the Nuclear Posture Review highlighted the increased role of the “shield” in front to a diminished role (but not quantity or structure) of the nuclear arsenals.

Finally, even if both the Bush and the Obama Administrations reasserted that the BMD project is based on research of security and not on the pursue of a military advantage, the extensive effort to build the ballistic defense is hardly explainable without referring to the pursue of technological and military primacy and consequently an increased possibility to intervene militarily in the international system by the United States.


24 ibidem
The Structure of the System.

The BMD system is a complex multilayered structure constituted by ground, sea and space based elements. It is divided in several components with distinct functions related to diverse technique of detection and interception.

The first approach to interception is constituted by the ground based system. This represent the first option to provide defense for forward deployed troops and bases. This represents moreover the key system for tactical theatre system. This kind of system has been employed since the First Gulf War in 1991 in order to cope the Iraqi Scud missiles thrown against Israel. This system is integrated by the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), utilizing ground-based interceptor missiles which can intercept missiles in the upper part of the atmosphere.

A number of ground interceptor are deployed also for the National Missile Defense system in Fort Greely (Alaska) and Vandenberg (California) aimed to protect the US soil against medium and long range missile.

The second type of interceptor are sea-based. The sea-based system could be used against any of the phases of a missile attack (boost, mid-course and terminal phase). The sea-based part of the missile shield is constituted mainly by the Aegis Ballistic Defense System. The Aegis SM-3 have a range of 1,000 kilometers and are designed to intercept a short- to intermediate-range ballistic missile in outer space.

Currently, according congressional reports\(^25\), the US Navy deploys 20 Aegis ships, operating in Western Pacific and in the Persian Gulf. The Aegis BMD system in its current configuration is intended to track ballistic missiles of all ranges, including

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intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), and to intercept shorter-ranged ballistic
missiles. The current configuration is not intended to intercept ICBMs.\textsuperscript{26}

Finally, the system can be spaced-based. The original “Star Wars” project was based
mainly on the space based interception phase. The current system envisage, even if in a
substantially minor extent, the use of satellites and lasers able to intercept a missile in its
mid course phase. This is the most expensive part of the system and the most susceptible
to alter the strategic equilibrium in the longer term. A part form deterring the “rogue
states” such a system could influence the strategic balance between the US and the other
nuclear powers, namely Russia and China.

Threat perceptions in East Asia.

Japan as well as the United States see the East Asian region as marked by two major
threats for their security: the political and military ascendance of China, and the
aggressive strategy of the North Korea. We have to consider them separately.

\textit{Military expenses (source, SIPRI database on World Military Expenses)}

As far as capabilities are concerned, China constitutes the greatest challenge for Japanese
security over the longer term. As the previous table illustrates, the level of Chinese

\textsuperscript{26} Ibidem.
military expenditure has been growing considerably since the early Nineties; it highly accelerated in early 2000's, and ultimately surpassed the Japanese level in 2004. From this point of view, Japanese concerns did not involve existing levels of expenditures only, but primarily the capacity of the Chinese economic and political system to generate a permanent military expansion. Nevertheless, other scholars argue more prudently, that “even if China tops virtually everyone’s list of threats, it is not clear why a risen China must threaten Japan”.

Evidence shows that Japan has been alarmed by the Chinese program to modernize of its forces since the early 1990s, even if the “China threat” had remained a taboo subject for Japanese public discourse up until the 2000s. Since the late Nineties, however, many Japanese analysts and policy makers started to consider the possible Chinese drive towards regional hegemony as the paramount threat to their security. According to this interpretation, China sees itself as the “natural leader of Asia”. Therefore, the Chinese economic and military rise would inevitably trigger an expansionist tendency, accompanied by a desire to extend its political control to the Korean peninsula, Indochina and Okinawa. The Sino-centric and imperial mindset of the Chinese leadership, associated to a long-term ascendency, would instigate Beijing to assume an aggressive posture and to try to coerce its neighbors through military means.

The primary concern from the Japanese perspective concerned the overall modernization of the Chinese forces which implied the pursuit of a so-called “Revolution in Military Affairs with Chinese characteristics”. The manifestation of the latter consisted of strengthening the Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery Force, and the acceleration of the process of informatization and modernization of weaponry and equipments. This process has been observed with particular apprehension by the Japanese, since, in the past, the Chinese military had never combined an high level of technological sophistication with its natural numerical superiority.


At the beginning of 1994, the Japanese government expressed officially concern for the Chinese military buildup for the first time, when Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata lamented “lack of transparency” during an official visit in Beijing at the end of that year. China had just initiated to modernize its military capabilities with an increase of 30% of the defense spending since the beginning of the decade. The National Defense Program Outline (FY 1996), despite not mentioning China directly, observed “the presence in the region of large-scale military capabilities including nuclear arsenals […] and […] many countries in the region are expanding or modernizing their military capabilities mainly against the background of their economic development”.

Three main trends of the Chinese modernization program contributes to the formation of a gloomier threat assessment by the Japanese: the growth of China’s ballistic and cruise missile capabilities, the ongoing development of a blue-water Navy and the technological development of the PLA Air Force.

On the nuclear and ballistic front, the expansion of Chinese forces has been constant over the last two decades. During the early 1990s, the Chinese nuclear program was not considered a major threat by the Japanese analysts and policy makers. PRC’s nuclear capabilities lacked technological sophistication and diversification. China did not possess an operational nuclear triad, and lacked a robust delivery system. Up to the late Nineties, the other two legs of China’s triad were even less developed than the land-based missiles.

The Japanese analysts considered these capabilities functional to deterrence, but ineffective in achieving political gains through blackmail against Japan. Indeed, until 1996-97 the JDA’s white papers described China’s nuclear and missile capabilities only in a restrained and a limited way. The Taiwan crisis in 1996 contributed to the perception of the Chinese military expansion being a potential threat. At the time, Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto expressed strong concern at the firing of the missiles over the Taiwan straits. He argued that “the increasing tensions over the Taiwan straits endangered the peace and stability of East Asia”, and, further, stressed that the missile testing had taken place “extremely near Japan’s territory and territorial waters”. This crisis reinforced the perception that the Chinese were willing to use force to promote its interests. It drew attention to the Chinese missile force and to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region. Moreover, it highlighted the role of the unresolved issue of Taiwan. Since then, both American and Japanese military planners, indeed, started to consider Taiwan the issue that could potentially determine the outbreak


of a conflict in the area. Since 1997 on, however, the white papers began to deal more extensively with the Chinese nuclear and ballistic capabilities, and started to discuss the increasing range and capacity of Chinese IRBMs. In 1997, the JDA made their first expression of concern about China’s nuclear weapons targeting Japan. As Yoshihide Soeya commented, the missile test “exposed the fundamental character of the Chinese foreign policy in time of transition, an assertive projection of its long term desires.” The perception of the nuclear threat further worsened in 1998 when the US and China reached an accord to stop targeting each other’s country with nuclear missiles. During the negotiations it had emerged that US bases in Japan were excluded from the agreement. The whole of Japanese soil, was thus targeted by the Chinese In 2000, the JDA White Paper explicitly mentioned the Chinese IRBM nuclear capability as a major threat to Japan. Moreover, it highlighted that China was not respecting the non-proliferation regime by allowing the transfer of nuclear materials to North Korea and Pakistan. Since the mid 2000s, the PRC reached the stage where they had “a full spectrum of offensive missile forces as well as a bona fide second-strike nuclear deterrent.” The development of SLBMs with a range of around 2,000 kilometers has been considered specially threatening for Japanese security. Even if a great part of these developments can be considered as an aim to improve Chinese deterrent, this rapid and massive acceleration of Chinese nuclear and ballistic forces contributed to destabilize the area, alimenting the Japanese perception of a deterioration of the security environment. The Chinese will to accelerate the modernization of its deterrence was, nevertheless,

34 Andrew J. Nathan, “China’s Goals in the Taiwan Strait” The China Journal No. 36 (Jul., 1996), pp. 87-93. Also Christenses, “Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster”.
39 ibidem
strengthened by the joint American and Japanese program to establish a ballistic defense system in the area.

Apart from the nuclear arsenal, the Chinese military invested massively in conventional missiles. Indeed, since the mid-1990s, the Chinese will to establish military capabilities functional to a possible takeover of Taiwan, stimulated efforts to expand China’s conventional military forces, including its conventional missile force. The PLA recently accumulated as many as 1,500 short- and medium-range conventionally armed ballistic and cruise missiles, many of which are highly accurate and increasingly destructive. Moreover, since the Ballistic Defense Project entered into its operative phase, the PLA had started to develop a variety of technical means to defeat missile defenses, including: decoys, penetration aids, and possibly multiple warheads. Since 2006-07, the PLA have introduced the Luyang and Luzhou destroyers, designed to provide capabilities somewhat equivalent to the Aegis air defense system of the US and Japan.

According to David Shambaugh, this trend of transformation and modernization could be considered natural for a rising continental power such as China, and, furthermore, it does not necessarily reflect any offensive posture. Nevertheless, the acquirement of a significant power projection capability has a destabilizing effect in the region, originating a security dilemma and unintended competition, even without explicit offensive intentions.

As Christopher Hughes highlighted, the development of this multiplicity of capabilities implies that China is not simply undertaking a process of military modernization per se, “but that it has a new appetite to project military power outside its own territory to secure its national interests, and thus it may be able to threaten Japan’s interests in the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyutai islands, interrupt Japan’s vital sea lines of communications (SLOCs), and even to attack Japan’s southern islands and Okinawa in an attempt to stop the US deploying from its bases in Japan in the event of a Taiwan Strait contingency.”

Tokyo often read malevolent intentions into China’s military buildup, even if they did not actually exist. Beijing started to consider a form of containment towards Japan’s military modernization, originating a spiral of insecurity. The interaction between mutual fear and capability-acquisition triggered a competition in security, and fostered hostility even in absence of clear offensive intentions. Moreover, the political use of a historical...


legacies, constituted by animosity and unsettled disputes concerning the past, contributed to render a peaceful resolution of controversies more difficult to attain; additionally, it could further inspire mutual distrust. As Mike Mochizuchi recently stated “They are more symptoms of an adjustment from the “friendship diplomacy” era to one characterized by a more realistic and frank interaction that involves a mix of “cooperation and coexistence” on the one hand and “competition and friction” on the other.”

The second major threat for the Japanese security concerns North Korea. Even if the DROK cannot challenge Japan in terms of and military capabilities and budget, its nuclear and ballistic program, and its offensive posture represent the most immediate security issue faced by Japan. According to the 2009 Blue Book on Defense, “North Korea’s nuclear issue has serious influence on Japan’s national security and it is also a critical problem for the entire international community in terms of non proliferation of WMD.”

North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons presents a serious and extremely complicated problem, with implications that could drastically affect Asian security. The DPRK’s nuclear brinksmanship poses two different challenges to Japan and the US–Japan alliance apart from the direct military threat. Japan could suffer the possible consequences of a preemptive attack on North Korea’s nuclear facilities, which the United States was reportedly prepared to carry out. If such an attack led to a full-scale war, Japan faced the risk of attacks by North Korea’s Scud-based Nodong missiles. Secondly, but equally relevant, is the likelihood that, as in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Japan might not be able to meet US expectations of military support, thus, causing a serious strain in the alliance.


Since the early 1990s, North Korea started to develop three missile programs labeled No Dong, Taepo Dong 1 and Taepo Dong 2. The first is an intermediate missile capable of reaching Japan, and its production started during the late Eighties. The Taepo Dong is a long-range intercontinental missile, and its actual production dates back 1996-97. Throughout the developmental phase of the program, North Korea was assisted by China, Russia and Iran.

On August 1998, North Korea launched a medium range ballistic missile, the Taepo Dong 1, that flew over Japan and crashed in the Pacific. The launching was particularly shocking for Japan. For the first time in the postwar period, Japanese public opinion expressed feelings that their country was being directly threatened by a hostile power. The launch demonstrated that both the US and Japanese analysts had underestimated the level of technological advancement attained by the program. The launch - although the third stage of the missile exploded during the flight - illustrated that Pyongyang had the capability to deliver a long-range missile almost 4000km beyond its territory. 51

The threat of a nuclear armed DROK reemerged in 2002, when a US delegation visited Pyongyang and confronted the regime with the suspicion that it begun a secret nuclear program using highly enriched uranium. Moreover, it was estimated that North Korea had deployed some 200 No Dong missiles, which were able to reach the entire territory of Japan. That year, the Defense White Paper issued by the JDA arguing that: “DROK has sought as a basic national policy to transform itself into a strong and rising power, adopting a military first policy to reach its aims […] Despite the economic difficulties it faces, it continues to give preference to military allocation of resources and to improve its capabilities and readiness. It possesses weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles and large scale special operation forces. North Korea’s ballistic and nuclear program represents a matter of concern for the entire international community and a main danger for security of Japan”.52

Japan’s National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) of 2004 (the document that lays out Japanese defense doctrine alongside the necessary force structure) refers to North Korea as a “major destabilizing factor” for regional and international security. Negotiations notwithstanding, the situation further escalated when DROK declared itself a nuclear weapons state in 2005. Facing international isolation and financial sanctions, imposed in 2005, the North Korean regime, launched the Taepo Dong 2 on July 2006. Furthermore, North Korea crossed “the nuclear Rubicon” on October 2006, testing a

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nuclear device in the North East of the country. In response, the UN Security Council approved a resolution to restrict the accessibility of materials related to any WMD capacity. In 2008, it was estimated that North Korea possessed circa 30 kilograms of plutonium, namely the equivalent of ten atomic bombs.  

The wake-up call of the Korean nuclear crises of 1998 and 2006 fundamentally contributed to the ultimate acceptance of the new security agenda and a major turning point in Japanese security strategy. A number of the analysts, however, argued that the Japanese reaction to the Korean threat could have been voluntarily overestimated. As Hughes argued, the “perceived North Korean threat has impacted so significantly on Japanese security policy, despite the fact that its impact is arguably disproportionate to the magnitude of the actual threat posed to Japan militarily. For Japan the North Korean threat is multiplied, or “super-sized”. According to this interpretation, the perception of Pyongyang as a major security threat for Japan has been often exploited by the Japanese government; and used as a convenient proxy threat to legitimize the adoption of changes in Japanese security policy that are more directly aimed at dealing with other forms of threats, and that appear politically and diplomatically more difficult to explicitly recognize. Particularly, it has been argued, Japanese policy-makers have manipulated the North Korean threat to coagulate the political consensus around its military procurement activities and moves to upgrade the alliance, in order that it can deal with the increasing and longer term threat from China. As Richard Samuels stressed, the Korean threat represents a something that resembles a “catch-all proxy threat to justify changes in security policy that are simultaneously driven by the greater long-term, but diplomatically unacceptable to articulate, threat from China”.

The Missile Defense in Japan.

Japan had officially demonstrated its interest in the Ballistic Missile Defense and started the discussion with the US in the mid-1980s, when the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) program began. Prime Minister Nakasone was the first of the American allies to show support to the initiative. The Japanese government, led at the time by Yasuhiro Nakasone was interested in the SDI for a number of reasons. For strategic reasons, since

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57 Given UK’s reservations towards SDI (Thatcher supported SDI "research" but did not go so far as to support "deployment"), MOFA was not about to let Nakasone’s statements be stronger than that of UK. After much deliberation, Nakasone expressed his "understanding" for SDI research.
the Soviet SS-20 were, then, recently deployed in the Soviet North East and were capable of being used against Japan in a pre-emptive strike. Moreover, the government favored this kind of cooperation for the “techno-national” reasons. This kind of cooperation in a high-tech system was functional to the process of indigenization of foreign technology, which had marked the Japanese model of development since during the time of the Cold War. Japanese military and industrial strategies have been built on a fusion of industrial, technology, and national security policies. As Samuels argued, “This fusion, dubbed techno-nationalism, has persisted in both the prewar era, when Japan used military means to achieve its national objectives, and in the postwar period, when its policies were more completely commercial. Japanese techno-nationalism has guided the nation to reinvent security in war and peace.”

Despite the Prime Minister’s personal interest, he was unable to commit the government to the SDI project. The domestic opposition and the constitutional constraints substantially prohibited every cooperation above the declaration of sympathy and understanding.

The cooperation entered into a more concrete phase in the first half of the Nineties. The JDA and the Department of Defense promoted a preliminary research over the viability of a system named Western Pacific Basin Architecture (WestPac). The Japanese government maintained its interest secret in order to avoid political frictions, acknowledging the controversial nature of the project. At the time the weaponisation of the space was considered strictly forbidden by Japanese law. The use of space for military purposes was, indeed, explicitly prohibited by the Diet resolution of the 1969 that had declared Japan’s dedication to the use of outer space only for peaceful purposes (heïwa no mokuteki).

After the conclusion of the four year preliminary study, the Japanese Defense Agency issued a report endorsing the joint research in a possible Theater Missile Defense system. The Japanese will to cooperate was reinforced by two main episodes: the Chinese missile test directed against Taiwan in 1996, and the Taepo Dong shock in 1998. The latter pushed national sentiments against the North Korean regime and brought regional missile proliferation pushed at the center of the policy debate. Japan stared to schedule a series of firing tests; SM-3 missiles were to be launched form a Aegis destroyer of the MSDF. This was considered the first practical step to assess the practicability of Japanese participation in the sea based BMD. On December 1998, the Japanese government made an internal decision to participate in a cooperative research and development of the theater BMD system in the area, signing a memorandum of understanding for five years of joint research and development.

The JDA White Paper of 1999 argued that the proliferation of WMD, and the missile threat from North Korea, represented the main concern for Japanese policy makers at the end of the Century (at the time Chinese military modernization was not clearly described as a threat). At that time, however, Japan did not commit itself to a long-term


cooperation, observing that the edification of such a system was against the Japanese law, and particularly against the Article Nine (which forbids the possession of offensive capabilities).


In 2001, the Bush Administration retired from the ABM and cancelled the distinction TMD and NMD, focusing on a single integrated system with layered defenses, capable of intercepting missiles of any range at every stage of flight (boost, mid-course, and terminal).\footnote{Hildreth, Steven. "Missile Defense: The Current Debate." CRS Report Congress, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, July 19,2005.}

The abolition of the distinction between the Westpac Theater Missile Defense and the National Missile Defense generated a number of concerns on the part of the Japanese. As many Japanese defense experts openly admitted, the relationship between NMD and TMD was not articulated when Japan made its decision to take part to the project in 1998. They thought that the NMD was simply "not Japan's business."\footnote{The project under the Clinton Administration was divided in two different and separated systems. A Theatre missile defense, the so called West Pac, aimed to protect Japan and US troops deployed in the Far East. This system was aimed to protect from short range missiles. A part form the protection of the allies it was aimed to assure US power projection in the area potentially inhibited by the existence of tactical short range missiles. The National Missile Defense was designed to protect the US soil from ICBMs. The first system had tactical purposes the latter had an eminently strategic function.}

The first and most evident concern regarded the fact that the new integrated system clearly contrasted the ABM Treaty, and, more broadly, caused a serious blow to the non-proliferation regime. Since Japan had been an outspoken supporter of this regime, during the postwar period, it represented a noticeable problem both domestically and internationally.

Japanese policy makers were also concerned by the use of Japanese technology for BMD, particularly for the upper-tier systems designed to protect US soil against long-range missiles, such as ICMBs. The use of such a system would violate Japan's non-nuclear policy and a long-standing legal interpretation related to the Japanese weapons export ban. The most relevant problem for Tokyo was related to the exercise of the “collective self defense”\footnote{Officially the Japanese government does not recognized the right to collective self defense under the Article Nine of the Constitution. “Under international law, there is recognition that a state has the right of collective self-defense, that is, the right to use armed strength to stop armed attack on a foreign country with which it has close relations, although the state is not under direct attack. It is beyond doubt that as a sovereign state, Japan has the right of collective self-defense under international law. It is, however, not permissible to use the right, that is, to stop armed attack on another country with armed strength, although Japan is not under direct attack, since it exceeds the limit of use of armed strength as permitted under Article Nine of the Constitution.” Japanese Ministry of Defense . Fundamental Concept of National Defense.}. The policy interpretation concerning collective self-defense, formulated
by the Cabinet Legislation Bureau in 1972, acknowledged that Japan has such a right under international law, but has no right to exercise it because of constitutional limitations. Given such legal limitations, the ballistic defense program was considered feasible only as long as it would be used for the defense of Japanese territory.\(^65\)

On June 2001, after a bilateral summit in Washington, the director of the JDA declared the will to participate in the system within the constraints of the Japanese constitutional limitations, arguing that "If Japan were to possess a ballistic missile defense system, it would be designed to protect the nation’s territory... It would be operated by Japan independently."\(^66\)

The Japanese uneasiness with the development promoted by the Bush Administration did not involve solely the domestic sensitivity to any change or erosion of the self-binding prescriptions still shared by an overwhelming majority of public opinion. The collective defense and arm export bans were systematically used throughout the postwar period as “hedging strategies” to resist the US pressure and to avoid any form of excessive entanglement.\(^67\)

The cooperation on the BMD, as proposed by the Bush administration (after the unification of the regional TMD and the US NMD in a single multi layered system), implied the loosening of part of these options.

The Japanese government reacted issuing a five point policy statement on December 2002: Japan shared the opinion that the proliferation of ballistic missiles was causing a serious threat to both countries' security; therefore, Japan and the US would continue to conduct cooperative research on BMD technologies. Japan expressed understanding


about the BMD program and stressed the necessity of various diplomatic efforts to address the proliferation of ballistic missiles.

In 2002, the Japanese government was persuaded of the technical viability of the system by a series of tests. In 2003, the North Korean regime contributed to cement the domestic consensus over the issue, withdrawing from the Non Proliferation Treaty and declaring its intention to maintain its nuclear program. On December 2003, the Japanese Cabinet decided to introduce the multi-layered defense system, based on the Aegis BMD system and Patriot Advanced Capabilities (PAC-3).

In 2003, the Cabinet adopted a policy decision “On Introduction of Ballistic Missile Defense System and Other Measures,” arguing that a robust missile defense system capability was a top priority and that it is a purely defensive system which “presents no threat to neighboring countries, and does not affect regional stability”.68

The Japanese Government explained its need and purpose of missile defense as follows: “in recognition of the need for comprehensive measures against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles and in consideration of the urgency with which the international community must respond to such proliferation, new threats including the activities of international terrorist groups, and various situations that may affect peace and safety, Japan will systematically coordinate increased diplomatic efforts and effective use of Japan’s defense capability, while solidifying the Japan-US security arrangement.”

The Japanese Cabinet claimed, moreover, that “the BMD system requires interception of missiles by Japan’s own independent judgment based on the information on the target acquired by Japan’s own information systems”; thus, trying to negate that the new shield could transform the traditional defensive defense into an implicit collective defense.69

The practical disposition over the implementation of the system was included in the “National Defense Program Guidelines in and after JFY 2005” and in the Mid-Term Defense Program (JFY 2005-2009) issued in December 2004.70

In December 2005, the JDA director announced a de facto relaxation of the Three Principles of arms export, arguing that, “[i]f Japan will engage in joint development and production of ballistic missile defense systems with the US, the Three Principles will not be applied, under the condition that strict control is maintained, because such systems and related activities will contribute to the effective operation of the Japan-U.S. security arrangements and are conducive to the security of Japan.”

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The Japanese government also declared its intention to share the financial burden of the system, paying between one third and a half of the entire cost of the West Pac (around 1.5 billions of dollars). Contemporarily, Tokyo decided to develop a more advanced generation of missile interceptors, starting a new joint research Program with the US. Shortly afterwards, the US State Department released an official statement that Japan had become the US’s most significant missile defense partner.

In 2006, North Korea launched a medium range missile and performed a nuclear test. The Japanese government reacted by positioning a battery of PAC 3 interceptors at Iruma Airbase, near Tokyo, and agreed to install a new X-Band radar at the Shariki Air Base in Aomori.

In 2007, the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe formed the Council on Reconstruction of a Legal Basis for Security in order to provide recommendations on the right of collective self-defense and to establish "whether it is appropriate for Japan to use its missile defense to intercept ballistic missiles targeting the United States". After different political controversies the resolution was approved in 2008. The final report stated that even if “the Japanese Government believes that the exercise of the right of collective self-defense exceeds the limit on self-defense authorized under Article Nine of the Constitution and is not permissible” […] “the exercise of the right of collective self-defense must be allowed for protection of US vessels in the high sea and in case of interception of ballistic missiles that could head for the United States”. This interpretation opens for a sort of collective defense transcending the previous strict limitations to activities on Japanese soil and areas surrounding Japan.

On December 2007, for the first time, a Japanese Aegis guided missile destroyer intercepted a missile that resembled North Korea’s Nodong outside the atmosphere. This has been considered a milestone in US-Japan missile defense cooperation. Japan became the first country other than the United States to succeed in intercepting a missile with the Aegis system.

At the end of 2008, the SDF was considered able to intercept medium range missiles, such as the Nodong, within the tactical range of 1000 km.

After the historical political change of 2009, some prominent member of the governing Democratic Party of Japan as the Minister of Foreign Affairs Katsuya Okada, expressed skepticism about the Japanese long term commitment, questioning the practical feasibility and the cost-effectiveness of the system. Moreover, the DPJ declared that the scheduled deployment and a protracted co-financing of the system could cause some fiscal strain to Japan. Former DPJ Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama initially endorsed the joint development of the Pacific BMD, allocating the necessary funds for the fiscal year 2010. In December 2009, Hatoyama suspended the allocation of additional funds requested from Japan’s Ministry of Defense for the deployment of new PAC-3.

The government led by Naoto Kan reversed the line of its predecessor and trying to keep the friction with the US at minimum. The BMD policy is no exception. Kan committed

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his country to strengthen the cooperation with the United States and confirmed the schedule regarding the deployment of PAC-3 and Aegis destroyers. Moreover, in May 2011 Kan broke another taboo allowing the export of the SM-3 to other countries allied to the United States.

Since June 2011, sixteen PAC-3 units has been deployed around major cities. The Ministry of Defense scheduled the deployed of four additional Aegis-equipped destroyers in August 2011.

The BMD and the normalization of the Japanese security strategy.

The Japanese participation to the BMD represents a fundamental step for the so called process of normalization of the Japanese security strategy. The debates over the “normalization” of Japan and over the necessity for the Japanese state to overcome part of the self-binging limits were initiated soon after the end of the Cold War, and, particularly, after the Gulf War in 1991. On that occasion, Japan was unable to take part in the coalition or to offer any concrete support to the coalition led by the United States; instead, Japan opted for so called “checkbook diplomacy”. In 1993, a prominent member of the LPD, Ozawa Ichiro, stated that Japan had to overcome the self-imposed limits, and it had then to become a “normal country” (futsu no kuni). In his “Blueprint for a New Japan” he argued “Japan must do things normally, in the same way as everyone else”. Ozawa called for the “end of Japanese exceptionalism and the abandonment of traditional low profile security strategy”, defining it “a mark of the Yoshida prevarication, of the Japanese selfishness and money grabbing.”

This argument opened up a wide and enduring discussion, both in public debate inside Japan and within the community of scholars that had analyzed the evolution of the Japanese security strategy after the Cold War. This call for normalcy, advanced by Ozawa, contributed to frame great part of the debate on the evolution of the Japanese strategy in terms of normalization and the persistence of Japanese exceptionalism.

A consistent part of the scholarly community, both in Japan and in the West, contested the hypothesis of security normalization. It was argued that the Japanese strategy was still overwhelmingly rooted in its identity of a pacifist state, and determined by the self-restraint imposed by domestic arrangements and shared values of non-violence and pacific resolution of international disputes.

Constructivist scholars highlighted how the “culture of antimilitarism”, that developed in Japan after the World War II, led it to adopt a highly restrained security policy and to avoid the development of offensive military forces. Japan’s behavior, these scholars argue, demonstrates the enduring influence of norms and culture on the state’s security policy. They, indeed, claimed that Japan’s devastating defeat in the Second World War originated antimilitarist norms that continued to affect Japanese foreign and security

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policy beyond, and notwithstanding, systemic constraints. Peter Katzenstein claimed, for instance, that “there exists no observable relation between Japan’s relative position and its security policy,” and that “Japan’s security policy will continue to be shaped by the domestic rather than the international balance of power.”

Sun-Ki Chai stated that “the incompleteness of systemic explanations suggests that domestic factors are essential to explaining the anomalous nature of Japanese defense policy.” Thomas Berger argued, that because of Japanese antimilitarism, “in each instance efforts to significantly expand Japanese defense establishments and international roles foundered on the shoals of domestic opposition.” Therefore, according to constructivist scholars, the most relevant variable to be taken into account in order to understand the Japanese behavior is still the Japanese security identity and expectionalism, rather than material variables or systemic incentives.

In this case, it is important to stress that is impossible to deny that these norms and values had any impact at all, ignoring very significant historical legacies and the relevant role of the domestic debate in shaping the country’s strategy and security policy. However, recognizing the impact of this variable does not imply a stronger assumption, similar to the one advanced by scholars such as Peter Katzenstein and Thomas Berger. They argued that the Japanese security strategy, and the relationship via à vis the US, is determined by domestic norms and a pacifist culture, rather than by systemic factors and threat perceptions. The pacifist culture and antimilitary laws, however, should have impeded any form integration that differed from the defensive defense, in case of direct attack, and a low level of interoperability of forces.

Japan has often been portrayed as an economic giant and a military pigmy. A number of scholars contributed to foster this image. Peter Katzenstein argued that “by any conventional measure of military strength, Japan ranks far behind its major industrial competitors.” Yoshihide Soeya wrote, “No responsible decision maker in postwar Japan has ever attempted to convert accumulated economic wealth into military might.”

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This misleading interpretation is conditioned by the statistics on defense spending as a percentage of GDP.\textsuperscript{83} However, looking at the data on aggregate military spending, Japan could easily be considered a first class military power (much more than China during the Nineties, and more than Russia throughout the post Cold War period). Even respecting the self-imposed fiscal limit, in place until 2004, the Japanese military spending was ranked fourth in the world. Only in 2004, China surpassed Japan in the military spending. In the case of the Japanese security policy, it will be necessary to pay attention to historical legacies and institutional and normative backgrounds. During the Cold War, the Japanese foreign and security policies were based on the “Yoshida Doctrine”, elaborated during the ’50s by the then Prime Minister, Yoshida Shigeru. This term refers to the policy of seeking protection under the US military umbrella and focusing Japan’s national energy and resources on economic regeneration, and wealth creation.\textsuperscript{84} After the Second World War, Prime Minister Yoshida realized that in a system marked by bipolar rivalry, the most convenient security strategy for Japan was to act as a junior partner of the United States and to base its economic reconstruction on the open international economic system that the United States were building.\textsuperscript{85} He was persuaded to consider the necessity of the alliance with the United States to protect Japan from the Soviet threat and to enhance domestic political stability. Within the security framework provided by the San Francisco Treaty, Japan could concentrate its resources on economic reconstruction and development, avoiding the dissipation of a significant part of its resources on the military.\textsuperscript{86} This doctrine had been “entrenched” in Japanese institutions through the formalization of the Constitution of the Article Nine\textsuperscript{87}, forbidding the use of

\textsuperscript{83} Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Miki in 1976 committed his government and its follower to respect a fiscal limit of 1% of the GDP for the defense budget.


\textsuperscript{87} The article Nine statue that “Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as a means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding
force and the maintenance of a “war potential” (but allowing a “defensive defense”), through self-imposed fiscal limits and submitting the military to strict governmental control.\(^88\)

This strategy has been the intellectual and political basis for Japanese policy makers during the Cold War. However, since the mid-Nineties, the Yoshida Doctrine has been subject to a so called “salami slicing”,\(^89\) namely, a gradual erosion of its principles dictates, and a process of “normalization” of Japanese foreign policy.\(^90\) In particular, Japan has been abolishing - or at least putting in serious doubt - what Kenneth Pyle has called the “eight self-binding restrictions”: no dispatch of SDF abroad, no collective defense arrangements, no power projection capability, no more than 1% GDP for defense, no nuclear arms, no sharing of military technology, no exporting of arms, and no military use of space.\(^91\)

The Japanese participation to the development of the Ballistic Missile Defence system represents fundamental step for the process of “normalisation”.\(^92\) Indeed, the participation to the BMD alone marks the substantial breaking of at least five of the “eight self-binding restrictions”: no collective defense arrangements, no power projection capability, no sharing of military technology, no exporting of arms and no military use of space.\(^93\)

The de facto legalization of the collective self defense represents a major departure from the Yoshida legacy. This principle was one of the major tenets of the Yoshida Doctrine and one of the main instruments Japan used to avoid any form of direct military involvement in military conflicts during the Cold War and after. It represents an

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\(^91\) Pyle. Op. cit. At the moment only the production of nuclear arms is still respected. However, Japan stationed US nuclear arms in Okinawa violating the principle of no possession, no production and no transition of nuclear weapons in Japanese territories during the Vietnam War.


\(^93\) Kenneth B. Pyle, \textit{Japan Rising: the resurgence of Japanese power and purpose}. New York: Public Affairs, 2007. The others self binding restriction were: no dispatch of SDF abroad, no more than 1% GDP for defense, no nuclear arms.
important step also for the alliance. The Security Treaty (Ampo) signed in 1960 did not include any kind of collective security clause. On the contrary, it committed the US to defend Japan but it did not compel Japan to any support to the US in case of aggression. The decision adopted in introduced an unprecedented level of reciprocity in the US-Japan relationship.

The decision of the “Council on Reconstruction of a Legal Basis for Security” claimed that the BMD system is considered only and purely defensive measure to protect life and property of the citizens of Japan against ballistic missile attacks, and meets the principle of exclusively defense-oriented national defense policy. Therefore, it is considered that this presents no threat to neighboring countries, and does not affect the regional stability. According to these considerations, the Japanese government argues that the system does not induce any change in the traditional defensive defense approach. The West Pac theater missile defense, however, is not a purely Japanese instrument but is above all an integrated system and a fundamental part of the US military complex in the area. I means that the Ballistic Missile Defense system has some fundamental consequences also on the Japanese role in the alliance with the United States and more generally in the area. The Ballistic Missile Defense system originates a number of potential situations of entrapment for the Japanese, namely situation in which Tokyo find itself involved without any real interest at stake or against its own will and security as a possible conflict over the Taiwan Strait.

The integration of the Japanese archipelago in the system, would create a situation of “tying hands” in a form of commitment that Japan had tried to avoid since Yoshida was in office. Moreover, this would give a more relevant role to commanders in the field, contrarily to one of the most essential principles of post-war Japanese foreign policy: the absolute subordination of the military to civil political power. For technical reasons, the establishment of a BDM system means that policy-makers and military commanders would have to respond nearly instantaneously to missile attacks; and consequently it could lead to the participation to an unwanted conflict regarding contingencies outside the Japanese defense perimeter or Japanese interests. In this way, Japan could be involved in conflicts related to Taiwan and North Korea without being directly attacked.

The decision to cooperate over the BMD project contributed to overcome also the Japan's long-standing, self-imposed restriction on the military use of space. In August 2003, a new law, the "Basic Space Law," entered into force, lifting the ban on Tokyo's use of space for defensive purposes. Thirty years earlier, when Japan's Space Agency was established, the Diet unanimously adopted a resolution committing the country only to

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96 Japan never recognized the issue of Taiwan as a national security priority. The only statement about this issue was issued in 1969 when Prime Minister Sato relied a communiqué to President Nixon arguing that Taiwan and ROK were “important” for Japanese security.
using space for peaceful purposes, which has been interpreted as non-military. The Basic Space Law changed that interpretation to “nonaggressive”, meaning the MSDF now can manufacture, possess, and operate its own satellites to support military operations such as ballistic missile defense. Thus, the MSDF plans to procure reconnaissance satellites, early warning satellites, and tracking and communications satellites—all areas in which Japan had been relying on the United States. For instance, it was the U.S. Defense Support Program satellites that detected the North Korean missile launches in July 2006. The Japanese possession of fully integrated BMD capabilities is contributing in turning Japan into a forward base for US ballistic defense. This implies a significant relaxation of the ban on the exercise of collective defense, even if, formally, it is still explicitly forbidden by the present interpretation of Article Nine by the Cabinet Legislative Bureau. As Kenneth Pyle argued recently, “The decision to cooperate fully in missile defense is particularly important in its long-range implications for the growing tightness of the relationship with the United States. It will entail enhanced coordination, exchange of information, and sharing of technology. Japan will now become an engaged ally.” The BMD is, indeed, considered in Tokyo to be the engine of change for Japanese defense policy as well as for alliance relations. The participation in the system triggered the acquisition of potentially offensive military assets, an increased command and control capability, significant restructuring of the collective defense establishment, and doctrinal changes that substantially allow pre-emption should an attack be deemed imminent. Overall, it marked a clear landmark in the ongoing path towards security normalization. Under the broad rubric of missile defense, Japan had to re-evaluate its position on the military use of space, collective self defense, command and control structure, the export of weapons technology and the conditions under which pre-emption may be warranted.

The acceleration of the process of normalization, related to the BMD, have a number of detrimental consequences for Japan. First of all, it reduces the availability of the hedging strategies that Japan used to resist US pressure on Japan to increase their contribute to the alliance. The de facto overcoming of the ban on collective self-defense and the prohibition for the export of arms and related technologies closes the possibility for Japan to use the constitutional prescription as method to alleviate the US pressure. As Andrew Oros pointed out, Japan’s principal fear “emanates from the risks of entrapment resulting from close bilateral cooperation with the US on BMD, especially due to the fashion in which BMD closes down many of its traditional hedging strategies against this eventuality.”

101 Oros, Normalizing Japan.
The Shield and the progressive failure of the Kokusanka

The BMD also has significant implications for Japan’s industrial-technology defense base. Tokyo’s participation to the ballistic defense project dramatically reduces the possibility to pursue any policy directed at attaining military self-reliance (kokusanka) as mean to achieve a sufficient degree of autonomy in foreign policy and strategic planning.\(^{102}\) The participation in the BMD, on one hand, reinforced the level of technological cooperation and promoted the coproduction of new weapons system. Japan has indeed participated in the joint production of the new generation of Standard Missile interceptors (SM-3 Block II) and the advanced Patriot (PAC-3) systems. Moreover, it developed a licensed version of the Aegis destroyer as a naval support of sea based systems: the Kongo class destructor. On the other hand, it implied the “off the shelf” purchase of part of the system from US contractors.

This kind of cooperation reflected the long standing strategy developed by the Japanese planners after the failure of the military kokusanka during the Seventies. Japan should be, according to this interpretation, “indispensable to the other”; or should at least be useful in technological defense terms, in order to improve their political leverage in the alliance. As far as the BMD is concerned, however, Japanese technological leverage remains incomplete. Apart from the coproduction of the SM-3 and the PAC-3, Tokyo decided to buy the rest of the BMD components through the FMS (foreign military sales) channel, avoiding the usual licensing-production scheme\(^{103}\). Japan, overall, has procured much of its BMD equipment from the United States, and is still dependent on US early warning satellites to obtain vital information on when and where a ballistic missile is launched. Both coproduction and co-development, however, tend to further hinder the long-standing Japanese attempt to maintain an independent defense base in order to promote political autonomy and an increased their room of maneuver in the alliance. Another relevant aspect of the cooperation over the BMD is the de facto overcoming of the ban over Arms export. In 1967, Prime Minister Eisaku Sato had adopted the Three Principles on Arms Exports, in response to the opposition Japan Socialist Party’s objection to Japan’s logistical support for U.S. forces in the Vietnam War. These principles prohibit Japan from exporting weapons to Communist-bloc countries, those countries subject to embargoes on arms exports under the U.N. Security Council’s


resolutions, and those countries engaged or “likely to be engaged in international conflicts”. They were reinforced in 1976 by the government of Prime Minister Takeo Miki, which imposed a total ban on the export of arms and arms-related equipment to all regions in the world, in line with the pacifist spirit of the Japanese Constitution. Then in 1983, when Yasuhiro Nakasone became prime minister, the principles were relaxed to exempt transferring arms-related technologies, though not military end items, to the United States. The Three Principles had previously barred the Japanese government from jointly developing and producing weapons as well as transferring weapons parts to any foreign countries, including the United States.

The Guidelines that endorsed the development of missile defense implied that the Three Principles on Arms Export and provisions related could be modified for the BMD deployment.

During the Cold War, the Japanese defense production was marked by two fundamental factors. The first one was the pursuit of technological self-sufficiency. During the first phase of the Cold War, through an high level of indigenization of foreign military technology. This process of indigenization was also functional to the economic renaissance of the country, since most military technology were dual use or transferrable to the non-military realm. During the 1970s, the pursuit of self-reliance assumed a more markedly military meaning, implying the maintenance of a independent military industrial base and an almost completely domestic oriented procurement.

After the failure to achieve the complete defense self-reliance, the Japanese government opted for a mixed model based on a general maintenance of a solid defense base together with a licensed production and co-development of some significant weapons system with the US. Since the mid Eighties, Japan had also licensed the production of key US weapons systems and had embarked on a number of co-development projects with Washington, as the FS-X aircraft.

The second fundamental factor was the constitutional limits on arms export. The Three Principle of Arms Export dramatically influenced the development of Japanese military base, limiting the market of the defense contractors to the domestic market. The arms export ban had long prevented Japan from exporting weapons as well as taking part in international collaborative efforts regarding defense technology developments, thereby making Japanese defense industry to depend solely on JDA orders and causing it to lag behind in the global technological competition. These limits notwithstanding, the Japanese government maintained an elevate degree of defense self-reliance as a fundamental priority throughout the 1990s. Japanese policymakers made efforts to maintain domestic industrial base ranging from materials to end product industries in the name of economic and national security, even when it has generated higher costs and inefficiency. Japanese government has sought to maintain an indigenous production base by initiating new projects, such as the P-X and C-X aircraft, and planned a stealth-fighter prototype. All were thought and designed to nurture indigenous technologies and to preserve the potential for systems integration and building larger platforms.

The high level of technological sophistication necessary to develop an effective military capability, however, made difficult for Japan to maintain an autonomous development policy. A key condition of autonomous development policy was the expansion of a domestic market that could accommodate the rapid growth of domestic production. Since high technology industries usually require economies of scale greater than national markets, the protection of a small domestic market hardly guarantees industrial success.
This problem has been worsened by the ongoing reduction of the defense budget and by the reorganization of the SDF promoted after the 1995 NDPO and accelerated after the 2005 NDPG\textsuperscript{104}. It appeared clear that defense self-reliance, the maintenance of quantitative budget limitations (the 1% ceiling), and the Three Principles were not compatible over the longer term.

The preservation of the total export ban and the 1% budget limit would deprive the industrial defense base of the necessary scale to develop a modern highly technological defense capability, undermining the possibility to maintain the defense self-reliance. The situation was further complicated by the US will to stop the unilateral flow of technology to Japan after the end of the Cold War.\textsuperscript{105}

As a consequence, since mid Nineties the Three Principle came under attack. Since 1996, senior members of the JDA, widely backed by the Keidanren (the national association of entrepreneurs) started to press the government in order to obtain some form of relaxation of the arms control ban in order to allow Japanese producers to participate to joint development of arm systems with US contractors. The supporters of a reexamination of the ban claimed that international cooperation in arms development was necessary in order to adapt to the situation in which defense spending was shrinking and to advance their overall technical sophistication. These claims reflected the increasing apprehension that the Japanese defense industry could be left behind in the global defense transformation and that its strengths could be greatly undermined by the declining demand for weapons in the post-Cold War era. The head of the JDA at the time commented, "We want the government to take into consideration that it is vital to maintain and strengthen the manufacturing and technological base within Japan," expressing concerns that further cutbacks could erode Japanese defense industrial foundation.\textsuperscript{106} Another senior JDA official commented, "Japan should not allow short-term considerations to further increase dependence on foreign supplies... [or else the] foundation of long-term security would be undermined."\textsuperscript{107}

Following the 1997 guidelines, a new framework for US-Japan industrial cooperation was established as a part of the move to further strengthen the alliance.\textsuperscript{108}


\textsuperscript{105} The FSX controversy was a clear example of the new US approach toward Japan. At the end of the Eighties the Japanese government planned to build a completely indigenous third generation jet fighter. The US forced Japan to abandon the project of realizing a completely indigenous aircraft and encouraged to co-develop an improved version of the F-16. Once the agreement over the coproduction was reached the US Congress suspended the project lamenting an excessive technology transfer.


\textsuperscript{107} Ibidem

and eventually co-production started to be considered the most cost-effective way to maintain an autonomous defense base without breaking the quantitative limits. As senior JDA officer argued in 1999, “Japan should no longer try to force domestic production when the United States has a competitive system or one for joint development.”

Whether this new era brings joint development or domestic production does not matter, what matters is the capability for development itself.” This sort of fervor for joint development implied the open questioning of the military kokusanka and promoted a substantial transformation in the way industry strategists viewed defense production. Japan's conversion to joint development stemmed, indeed, both from the renewal of the of the alliance completed in 1997 with the new Guidelines and by the vulnerability of purely indigenous production. It was realized that Japan was no longer able to promote an complete indigenous defense base. Therefore, in order to avoid the complete loose of any kind of advanced technological defense base the cooperation in defense production became a priority.

In 2001, the JDA published its “Guidelines for Conducting Research and Development,” which stated its basic policies of “attempting to nurture and maintain a suitable base in technological areas that are strongly military in nature” and “nurturing and maintaining a technological base by continuing to work independently in technological fields deemed necessary to Japan’s unique character, promoting technological cooperation with the USA with a view to maintaining interoperability, and entertaining the possibility of introducing technology from other countries.”

In 2004, the Araki Report stressed the necessity to “work to establish a defense production and technology base, especially in core areas indispensable for national security.”

At the beginning of 2005, the JDA reaffirmed the commitment to preserve the Japanese technological defense base arguing that “Japan as a technology based nation deploying its productive power, will develop, produce, and maintain exceptional equipment by retaining a domestic production base and thereby contributing to the national security of the country”.

Despite these efforts, the JDA concluded in 2005 that Japan’s defense production base was “seriously weakening”.

Thus, in December 2005, on occasion of the beginning of the cooperation over the BMD project, the Japanese government determined that the Three Principles on Arms Exports would not be applied and that the export of other future defense projects to the United States would be examined on a case-by-case basis.

In 2006, a statement regarding the lifting of the arms export ban was issued. It was argued, indeed, that a partial relaxation of the export ban “serves the national interest to

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109 Quoted in Andrew Oros, Normalizing Japan. Pp. 173-74
111 Ibidem.
113 Heigo Sato, ibidem
pave the way for Japan’s participation in the joint development of weapons. The new defense policy outline must not just be a minor review of the current policy.\textsuperscript{114}
Since 2007, the Ministry of Defense (the JDA was just elevated to ministerial status) recognized that since the limited resources and the maintenance of the 1% budget ceiling the first necessity was to maintain a state of the art defense forces and, only secondly, to preserve an high degree of domestic production. The cooperation and the coproduction were indicated as the only possible way to maintain both quantitative limits and to avoid technological backwardness and dependence. The JDA White Paper argued, indeed, that “In the course of making progress in raising the level of our defense equipment and technology, by participating in international joint development projects we will be able to acquire the most advanced production equipment. This will strengthen the technological base of Japan and its national security”.\textsuperscript{115}
Christopher Hughes highlighted that “Increasingly, Japan’s policymakers see an end to the exports ban as the key to reversing the decline in the domestic defense production base and preserving a degree of kokusanka through international cooperation”.\textsuperscript{116}
Japan moved away from a narrow conception of military autonomy typical of the late Cold War era toward a broader definition in which kokusanka was an element of a more complex consideration of Japan’s comprehensive security needs. Broadening of Japanese security options and the enlargement of its role in the alliance shifted the self reliance in the military production away from the center of the stage.
The overlapping effect of the expansion of the SDF role and the perceived necessity to open the Japanese defense base to co-production and co-development effort implied a further integration of Japan in the US military complex with relevant effect on the alliance. These development contribute to foster the level of military integration in the alliance and to redesign the roles between the US forces in the area and the SDF. Moreover, the increasing acknowledgement that the maintenance of the Japanese technological and industrial base substantially depends on joint production with the US undermines the Japanese bargaining power in the alliance and its capacity to resist the US pressure aimed to force Japan to undertake other steps in its process of normalization and integration in the US military structure in the Asia Pacific. The making of the Ballistic Missile Defense is the most evident example of this dynamic.

\textbf{China, Russia and the Shield}

Finally, Japan’s participation in the BMD contributes to destabilize the fragile equilibrium between Japan and China, fostering the present security competition. China, indeed, perceives the deployment and the recent expansion of the BMD system as a threat to its security. From Beijing’s perspective, it is inconceivable that Washington would expend such massive resources on a system that would be purely defensive and aimed only at “rogue” states. As seen by Chinese leaders, China’s own strategic arsenal appears to be a much more plausible target for US missile defenses. China, indeed

\textsuperscript{114} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{115} Ministry of Defense, \textit{The Defense White Paper 2007}.
\textsuperscript{116} Christopher W. Hughes, Japan’s national security policy and capabilities', \textit{Adelphi Papers}, 44:368, 67 - 96
repeatedly affirmed that the BMD undermines its offensive nuclear deterrence. Beijing fears the involvement of Japan in possible Taiwan contingencies and is concerned by the possibility that Japan will obtain protection from SLBMs and tactical missiles. During the late Nineties and early 2000s, PRC tried to establish a common Sino-Russian front in opposition to BMD. In April 1999, China and Russia released a joint communiqué that expressed their anxiety over the issue, and declared that they would continue to consult each other. Russia and China also proposed a UN resolution in October 1999, demanding that BMD programs observe with the ABM Treaty. Despite such Chinese efforts to ensure the Russian support, the united front to oppose BMD broke down when the US announced its decision to unilaterally abrogate the ABM Treaty on December 2001. While Putin harshly condemned the decision China did not expressed its opposition immediately. The failure to achieve a common policy fundamentally inhibited the consolidation of the Sino-Russian alignment aimed to oppose the BMD.

When the Bush administration announced its decision to withdraw from the ABM Treaty, the Chinese foreign ministry reacted by calling for multilateral talks on the issue. In December 2002, the Minister of Foreign Affairs declared that China was "worried" about US-Japan TMD cooperation, and urged that "countries involved act cautiously." When the Bush Administration announced its intention to start the NMD deployment by 2004, the Chinese foreign ministry stressed that , "the development of the missile defense system should not undermine international and regional security." After the failure of the Sino-Russian alignment, China started to enhance its MIRVed type capabilities in order to compensate in terms of deterrence. Moreover, the PLA stated a series of anti-satellite tests since 2007.

As Joan Johnson-Freese highlighted, after the start of the anti satellite tests, China and the U.S. “have been engaged in a dangerous spiral of action-reaction space planning and/or activity.” In November 2009, the commander of the Chinese Air Force called the militarization of space “a historical inevitability.” The PLA increasingly considers space as a new and critical dimension of future warfare. China’s military space program, as a consequence, is seen as part of a wide asymmetric strategy designed to counterbalance conventional US military advantages.

Generally, Chinese strategists are conscious of the US military’s plan to achieve so-called full-spectrum dominance. Many analysts in the PLA think that a multilayered ballistic missile defense system will inevitably compromise China’s offensive nuclear forces and that China’s response should be aimed to weaken the US space-based sensor system that serves as the eyes and brains of missile defense. According to Baohui Zhang, for instance, the West-Pac system has forced China to contemplate the integration of the Second

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118 Christopher Griffin and Joseph E. Lin, “China’s Space Ambition,” Armed Forces Journal, April , 2007


Artillery and space warfare capabilities. China is indeed pursuing military space capabilities to counter perceived national security threats posed by the US quest for space dominance and missile defense.

**Conclusion**

The Japanese participation to the BMD is a major step toward the normalization of the Japanese security strategy. This process has not been solely driven by the changing security environment or by an evolution of the Japanese security identity, due to the erosion of the Japanese post-war Culture of Antimilitarism. The evolution of the alliance with the United States and the changing bargaining power of the Japanese state are the key variables to take into account in order to understand and to describe this process.

The alliance between US and Japan, indeed, has been undergoing a qualitative change since the end of the Cold War. It cannot be described or understood uniquely in systemic terms, emphasizing the role of the demise of the Soviet Union or the role of the rise of China. Neither the recent and current evolution of the alliance can be grasped focusing on changing level of threat perception alone.

The primary driver that determined the evolution of the alliance can be considered the changing role of Japan in the East Asian (and global) geopolitical environment. During the Cold War, the paramount objective of the US grand strategy was to make sure that no aggregate of industrial-military power in Asia and Europe could mobilize against the US (independently as in WW2 or by an external power as during the Cold War). The strategy of containment was the logical consequence of this priority. As Yoshida and his followers fully understood this overall strategy left room for a minimalist strategy for Japan. It could give priority to recovery, pursuing a developmental economic model and to adopt a minimalist foreign and security strategy inspired to the Yoshida Doctrine and to the concept of “mercantile realism”.

Consequently, the end of the Cold War did not

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mean simply the end of the “big overreaching threat that blurred all the divergence of interests”\textsuperscript{125}. It meant much more. The Japanese asset radically changed its values in the global exchequer. It was no longer an amount of industrial potential that could be mobilized once again against the US by an external power. As far as security is concerned it became “the cornerstone of the US engagement in an increasing dynamic and potentially unstable area”\textsuperscript{126}

This brought to four main consequences, during the Cold War the necessity to protect Japan from the Communist aggression encouraged the US to sustain the Japanese defense base, creating a system aimed to transfer military technology to the Japanese allies. The Japanese took advantage from it both economically and militarily, creating a whole cycle of technological internalization aimed both to reinforce the security and the economic advancement of the country. This strategy was an essential part of the Yoshida doctrine as a comprehensive security strategy. It created the fundamental condition to maintain an advanced technological defense base and a number of self binding prescriptions, as the budget ceiling and the ban on arm export. As long as the unilateral technological transfer had endured it was possible to maintain the constitutional limitations without seriously harm the country’s long term “comprehensive security”. After the end of the Cold War, the United States decided to terminate the unilateral technology transfer. Therefore, the contradiction between the maintenance of the arms export, the 1% ceiling and the continuation of the policy of \textit{kokusanka} clearly emerged.

This forced the Japanese to relax their self binding limitations and to cooperate with the US on fundamental defense projects as the BMD in order to preserve their defense base. Two of the main pillars of the Japanese postwar security strategy, the preservation of Japanese technological self sufficiency and the avoidance of any form of binding entanglements clearly started to be incompatible.

Thirdly, the new environment brought the end of security free ride. Since the second part of the 1990s Japan accelerated its process of normalization. It brought to the progressive erosion of all the eight self restraint principals that characterized the Yoshida Doctrine. Even if Tokyo formally maintained great part the symbols of postwar anti-militarism, as the article Nine of the Constitution and the fiscal cap on military spending and the nuclear taboo, all the main tenets of the postwar strategy are vanished\textsuperscript{127}. Since the end of the Nineties, Japan dispatched the JSDF abroad, shared military technology, acquired power projection capabilities, started to use the space for military purposes and reconsidered the ban on the exercise of the collective defense. The progressive overcoming of these limits eroded the capacity to resist US pressure and allowed the Japanese involvement in initiative such as the Ballistic Missile Defense that have a transformative effect of the alliance and on the Japanese security strategy.

A fourth point concerns the post Cold War role of the “American Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier”. Ironically, the definition of the former Prime Minister Nakasone is becoming more and more realistic and accurate. In the East Asian theatre Japan’s strategic values

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depend both on its own actions and contributions and on its role of hub for the US power projection. Indeed, in the eyes of US strategist Japan must not be backed and supported in every circumstances independently from its behavior (as during the Cold War) but must be encouraged to play its role as “military hub nation” and active junior partner in the area integrated in the US-led military apparatus. As a consequence, issues as the integration of Japan in the Ballistic Missile Defense System assume a crucial importance.

These considerations allow us to describe the recent evolution of the alliance as a far more complex dynamic then a series of balancing acts against the North Korean or Chinese threats. For Japan, this new and evolving scenario represented a renewed form of gaiatsu128, as they used to refer to the external pressure that historically forced the Japanese state to adapt in order to survive or to maintain autonomy from external forces. The progressive integration in the US military apparatus and the enhanced interoperability with US forces can close or reduce drastically possibility to abstain from the great game of power politics in East Asia. Once fully operational, the TMD system will involve a series of binding commitments substantially able to undermine Japan’s hedging strategies. The asymmetric dependence on the realm of nuclear deterrence and the lack of available alternatives to deter North Korea and China, make future cooperation more likely. Moreover, a complex (and very costly) system as the BMD creates a political commitment for future cooperation in possible contingencies beyond the traditional defensive defense approach that marked the Japanese security posture throughout the Cold War and the Nineties.