

Missile Defence and Nuclear Deterrence in post-Cold War Regional Conflicts*

Dr. Masako Ikegami, Associate Professor & Director

Center for Pacific Asia Studies (CPAS), Stockholm University

E-mail: masako.ikegami@orient.su.se Fax: +46-8-168810 Phone: +46-8-162899

Missile Defence in the Post-Cold War Era

Nature of Post-Cold War Conflicts and Confrontation

After the Cold War, threat assessment for nuclear warfare has changed: from strategic nuclear attack with global catastrophe as a consequence, to non-strategic ballistic missile attack by 'rogue states' in geographically confined regional conflicts. The Cold War regime assumed 'stability' by way of nuclear deterrence and mutual vulnerability (so called mutual assured destruction, MAD) between the symmetrical parties (USA and the Soviet). On the other hand, the post-Cold War situation is featured as instability among asymmetrical parties (e.g. 'rogue states' and non-state actors like international terrorists) which may not follow the logic of deterrence. In a word, pattern of conflicts and confrontation has transformed from dichotomy to multi-polarity, and from symmetrical- to asymmetrical confrontation with differentiated actors with different nature. Thus the post-Cold War security situation is subject to higher degree of anarchy and unpredictability, with diffused image of threat. Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and missile technology worsens this insecurity.¹

It is hardly expected that logic of nuclear deterrence work in post-Cold War regional conflicts due to their complex nature: e.g. many actors involved directly or indirectly, deep-rooted conflicts of long history, asymmetric confrontation involving various non-state actors such as terrorists. The Cold War nuclear confrontation was basically dichotomous, symmetrical and ideological, based on thorough calculations and rigorous logic (the consequence was "MAD"), and the United States and former Soviet shared some values such as the sense of superpower and fear of global catastrophe. That enabled highly technical and rigorous handling to control the situation. However, post-Cold War regional conflicts are fought over concrete issues such as territory and fundamental values such as religion, often involving a matter of blood and flesh. In such a situation, logic of mutual deterrence could be easily distorted and replaced by human factors such as distrust, wish of revenge, pride, miscalculation and misperceptions. In post-Cold War regional conflicts, warfare is most likely to be confined geographically, and basically escalation to global nuclear warfare is not assumed. This assumption might well lower psychological threshold in favour of the actual use of forces (not only for deterrence) in regional conflicts.

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¹ Apart from the five recognized nuclear weapon states, there are 33 nations with ballistic missiles: among them 27 nations have short-range missiles under 1,000 km, or 22 of them have Scuds or similar short-range missiles of 300-km range or less; six nations have medium-range missiles over a 1000-km range (Israel, Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, North Korea and Iran); four nations have active programs for developing intermediate-range missiles of over 3,000 km in the next 10 years (India, Pakistan, North Korea and Iran). While ICBM over 5,500 km-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBM) with range of 3000 to 5,500 km has decreased due to the START treaties and the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, the number of medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBM) programs is increasing (Joseph Cirincione, Director, Non-proliferation project, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "Assessing the Ballistic Missile Threat", Subcommittee on International Security, Proliferation and Federal Services, Committee on Government Affairs, 9 February 2000, p. 8.).

The US Efforts for Missile Defence Development

Today, the United States is the only government in the world devoting a significant part of its funds for BMD development. Decades of US efforts for BMD development marked the first wave in the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), 1983-1993. However, the 1991 Gulf War shifted the perception from strategic- to theatre ballistic missile threats. Also, given WMD proliferation in the Third World, there emerged a fear that there are actors who may not follow the logic of nuclear deterrence (so-called 'rogue states' and non-state actors such as international terrorists), and a fear that those actors may actually employ WMD in post-Cold War regional conflicts. Based on this post-Cold War threat assessment, SDIO was reorganized into the Ballistic Missile Defence Organization (BMDO), and since then, the United States is vigorously developing variety of missile defence systems, which eventually aims at multi-layered defences ("defence-in-depth") using air-, land- and sea-based boost phase, upper and lower tier systems in an integrated architecture.² The Pentagon has been fairly successful in recruiting its allies into various BMD development projects in order to let them share R&D funds and investment risks.³ Some other nations like Russia are also developing missile defence systems, albeit with limited capability. Indeed, development and deployment of missile defences is becoming a matter of course, whether we accept it or not. This is also a reflection of the advancement of information technology (C4I).

For the United States, BMD is an imperative in order to maintain the presence of its overseas forces and military intervention capability in the region, even if BMD systems have limited effectiveness for the force protection. Despite that the United States is the only superpower after the Cold War, Americans are increasingly reluctant, unless vital US interests involved, to sacrifice US soldiers lives in overseas combat.⁴ Given such public sentiment, US leaders find it increasingly difficult, or have to be very prudent, in deciding on international military intervention, particularly if there exist missile threats in the region in question. In this sense, BMD is regarded as a guarantor of the autonomy of US foreign policies. As 'The National Security Strategy of the USA' (The White House, September 2002) emphasizes, the US government regards the US military predominance as the pillar of world order led by the US.⁵ Constraint of military resources in a long term also affects the strategy. Despite that the current Bush administration has increased the military budget considerably, it is unlikely that the level of military expenditure will rise back to the Cold War level in a longer term.⁶ Thus,

² US Department of Defence, 1999, "Reports to Congress on Theater Missile Defence Architecture Options for the Asia-Pacific Region", opening comments ([http://www.fas.org/spp/starwar\(s\)/program/tmd050499.htm](http://www.fas.org/spp/starwar(s)/program/tmd050499.htm)).

³ For examples, the Arrow system with Israel, Medium Extended Air Defence Systems (MEADS) with Germany and Italy, and Navy Theater Wide Defence (NTWD) with Japan. BMDO is collaborating even with Russia for the Russian-American Observation Satellites (RAMOS) program which originated in 1992 to develop and test space-based surveillance technologies jointly (Statement of Lt. Gen. R. T. Kadish, BMDO Director before the Senate Appropriations Committee/Defence Subcommittee, 12 April 2000).

⁴ Thus US decision-makers might well try to solve this problem by advanced technology. Although it is unrealistic to think about overseas military operations without any casualties of its own troops, there is certainly a kind of wish (or illusion) that advancement of technology could materialize it.

⁵ (Against terrorist threats) "Our response must take full advantage of strengthened alliances, the establishment of new partnerships with former adversaries, innovation in the use of military forces, modern technologies, including the development of an effective missile defense system, and increased emphasis on intelligence collection and analysis" ('The National Security Strategy of the USA', The White House, September 2002, p. 14.

⁶ Since 1987 marked the end of a period of extraordinary military build-up, expenditure on military equipment fell by 36.9% in net in total NATO, and 40.5% net reduction in the United States (at constant 1998 prices and exchange rates: *SIPRI Yearbook 2001*: 228). During 1990-2000, the US military expenditure fell by 26% in net and the that for military research, development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E) fell by 19% from 46.7 \$billion to 38\$billion (at 2001 constant price) (*SIPRI Yearbook 2001*: 238). Since 1998 the defence budget turned upward, and the Bush Administration increased the defence budget significantly; 7% higher in real terms in FY 2002 than FY 2001, and requested budget for FY 2003 will represent an increase of 8.1 % of FY 2002 DOD outlays; an increase of 17.7% in real terms in only two years (*SIPRI Yearbook 2002*: 317). Particularly the

how to maintain its military predominance with limited resources and less risk for the Americans, would be an important issue for the US policy makers. By way of letting its allies and overseas forces deal with regional missile crises by forward-deployed BMD, the United States can secure its overseas military presence with minimum costs, even if there exist tactical missile threats in regional conflicts in questiona.

US-Japan Collaboration in Sea-based Midcourse Defence (SMD) system

Since the 1990s, the United States and Japan are collaborating for technological research on the Theater Missile Defence (TMD) system, or in JDA's view BMD (in the sense of protecting Japan's home ground), with the initiative taken by the United States.⁷ In 1993 the US-Japan joint research program, the Western Pacific Missile Defence Architecture (WESTPAC) concluded with a proposal that the United States and Japan should develop and deploy the missile defence system against missile threats from Russia, China, and North Korea. In October 1994, a Japanese Government-led "US-Japan Bilateral Study on Ballistic Missile Defence" was initiated.⁸ From January 1995 started a US-Japan bilateral study on the technological feasibility of ballistic missile defence (BMD) system, and the Japanese Defence Agency (JDA) conducted "Comprehensive Research on Japan's future air defence system" with cooperation with the United States, spending 560 million yen under FY 1995-98 (*Defence of Japan* 1999: 81). The research concluded that BMD is technologically feasible. After the North Korean *Taepodong1* launch over the Sea of Japan in August 1998, JDA decided in September 1998 technical cooperation on Navy Theater Wide Defence (NTWD). NTW program (sea-based upper-tier BMD) is designed for Aegis-equipped surface combatants to have an exo-atmospheric theater ballistic missile defence capability, which will eventually provide an intercept capability against medium- and long-range theater ballistic missiles during the ascent phase, along the trajectory, or during the descent phase.⁹ For NTWD-related R&D, JDA budgeted 2.048 billion yen in FY2000 and 3.708 billion yen (about US\$31 million) in FY2001 (*Defence of Japan 2001*: 184).

JDA is collaborating in four components of the NTW system, albeit a marginal part of the whole system; nosecone to protect the infrared seeker from heat, kinetic warhead, infrared seeker to detect and follow target, and second-stage rocket monitor of a three-stage missile (*Defence of Japan* 1999: 84). Japan joined a program as early as in the definition phase when technological feasibility of Block II program was yet clear.¹⁰ Thus the JDA repeatedly

RDT&E budget jumps by 14.4% in real terms from FY 2001 to 2003 for major programs such as missile defence (ibid. 318). However, the defence burden –military spending as a share of GDP– has dropped from about 10% of GDP in the 1950s to about 3% by the end of 1990s (op.cit. 311), and in terms of FY2003 prices, the DOD expenditure is considerably below the peaks in 1953 (Korean War), 1968 (Vietnam War) and in 1987-89 at the peak of Cold War build-up (ibid.).

⁷ In September 1993, at the US-Japan defence summit, the United States invited Japan to cooperate in developing TMD system. Accordingly the US-Japan TMD Working Group (TMD WG) was established under the Security Sub-Committee (SSC) in December 1993 to study the feasibility of TMD within the framework of the US-Japan security treaty (*Defence of Japan* 1999: 81).

⁸ The study provided extensive simulation and systems analysis to identify and evaluate various missile defence alternative architectures; the results identified and evaluated specific Japanese TMD-related technologies associated with the US NTW program and their related capabilities that would enhance US TMD systems development (DoD, "Report to Congress on Theater Missile defence Architecture Options for the Asia-Pacific Region", <http://www.fas.org/spp/starwars/program/tmd050499.htm>).

⁹ "Theater Missile Defences in the Asia-Pacific Region", A. Henry L. Stimson Center Working Group Report No. 34, June 2000: 8.

¹⁰ "Preliminary planning is already underway for follow-on work with Japan to demonstrate and validate the products of the initial research. We will integrate this cooperative work into NTW program planning. Current NTW funding allows the program to complete ALI flight-testing through FY02 that is key to determining whether the system works, continuing the US-Japan cooperative project noted above... Both Upper-tier programs should proceed based on demonstrated success" ('Statement of Lt. Gen. Ronald T. Kadish, USAF Director,

emphasize that the decision whether to proceed to the development phase is yet to be made.¹¹ On the other hand, research for the NTW Block II interceptor-related technology would be of significance in terms of its potential applicability for sea-based BMD as well as boost-phase system.¹² Since the reorganization of the BMDO of May 2001, technological applicability ranges wide, without distinction of TMD and NMD anymore. This potential applicability of technology may give Japan difficulty in decision-making for further NTWD development: If sea-based BMD which Japan is involved could be applied to interception of strategic missiles aiming at the United States on boost-phase, this would violate the Japanese Constitution which prohibits 'collective defence' as a means of waging war.¹³ Thus the US-Japan collaboration in NTWD developed rather slowly, due to political and legal constraints on Japan's side, and major reorganization of BMD programs on the US side. However, the situation is changing. Two successful test of the Aegis lightweight exo-atmospheric projectile (LEAP) Interceptor (ALI) missile (Standard Missile/SM-3 with kinetic warhead) of 25 January and 13 June 2002, became significant in the course of US-Japan collaboration in the sea-based midcourse defence (SMD) system (a more generic terminology). Missile Defence Agency (MDA: reorganized and renamed from BMDO in January 2002)¹⁴ now believes that SMD is the most viable route to midcourse missile intercept and should receive priority in developing funding.¹⁵ A small-scale contingency SMD capability based on the recently tested ALI missile may be operational as early as 2004.

BMDO before the Senate Appropriations Committee, Defence Subcommittee, 12 April 2000', BMDO, p. 15).

¹¹ "This cooperative technical research is at the level of 'research and study' to further ensure the technical possibilities of BMD, etc. The transition toward the development stage and the transition toward the deployment stage are judged separately; these judgements are conducted following extensive considerations of the technical feasibility of BMD and the modalities for future defence of Japan" (*Defence of Japan* 2001: 184). Usually Japanese defence procurement process is customized to proceed almost automatically into development phase once a program is budgeted for research phase. However, given a much higher risk of technological feasibility and large-scale budget involved, this custom might have to be reconsidered depending of demonstrated success of the system.

¹² "Without upgrades, the NTW Block II system would have no useful capacity against ICBMs or SLBMs. However, the unmodified NTM Block II system could have a capability against shorter-range threats attacking US coastal targets.... the NTW Block II system could have the capability to defend against tactical and intermediate range ballistic missile threats provided the NTW-capable ships are given sufficient warning of the impending attack to deploy a few hundred kilometer of the threat launch location or of the area to be defended", "NTW Block II interceptor is a key consideration for achieving enhanced performance in an NMD role" (Summer Report to Congress on Utility of Sea-based Assets to National Missile defence', BMDO, 1 June 1999, p. 3, p. 11).

¹³ "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 means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized" (Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution). However, interpretation of 'collective defence' is getting more pragmatic among Japanese and US decision-makers; we have already seen a sign of this trend in Japan's decision to provide logistic support with US operations in Afghanistan in 2001.

¹⁴ BMDO was re-designated and elevated to MDA in January 2002, giving national priority and emphasis on missile defence. The overall objectives are to establish a single program to develop an integrated MD system applying a capability-based requirements process, and to field elements of BMDSs as soon as practicable ('DOD Establishes Missile Defence Agency', http://www.defenselink.mil/news/jan2002/b01042002_bt008-02.html).

¹⁵ MDA Director, Lt. Gen. Kadish remarked in the special briefing in June 2002, "in terms of the sea-based, we are in a very interesting and enviable position in terms of that particular project, the Aegis LEAP interceptor project" (<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/June2002/g020625-D-6570C.html>).

Missile Defence in Asymmetrical Regional Conflicts

Demarcation Effect: Risk of Miscalculation incurred by Missile Defence

To be highly theoretical and speculative, one potential problem attributing to MD is that its deployment, combined with the increasingly precise and compact WMD, may lower psychological threshold of employing missile attack, if a regional conflict falls into most tense deadlock. No wonder, MD is initially designed against a failure of deterrence, namely the actual use of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in a regional conflict. During the Cold War, there was a strategic linkage between limited- and strategic-nuclear warfare. There was always a risk of nuclear warfare escalation, should decision-makers have resorted to the use of WMD even in a limited scale. However, if MD deployed in the post-Cold War context, threats of ballistic missiles and WMD in a regional conflict are supposed to be countered primarily by MD, without applying strategic nuclear retaliation. This implies that MD deployment, together with the development of short-range precise missiles, would have a 'Demarcation effect'. Namely, regional missile crisis and the failure of deterrence (the actual use of missiles and WMD) are expected to be confined in a geographically limited region without a risk of escalating into strategic retaliation; i.e. extended nuclear deterrence does not have to be employed. In other words, this very effect is a major objective of MD development, as James Mulvenon argued; "the future deployment of reasonably effective missile defences therefore might add an additional layer of credibility for US power projection, since in some cases *they may remove the necessity for Washington to launch nuclear weapons* (emphasis added)".¹⁶ Deployment of MD is critical variable effecting US policymakers' decisions whether to intervene into overseas conflicts where missile threats exist. In this sense, MD is a guarantor of 'freedom of action'. Ironically and paradoxically, the 'demarcation effect' might lower the psychological threshold of the adversary in favour of the actual use of missile.

During the Cold War, there was a fear that even a limited missile attack would escalate to strategic nuclear warfare. This fear deterred the use of WMD. This was the basis of MAD doctrine as well as the ABM and SALT arms control framework. However, after the Cold War, conditions are quite different from those of the Cold War nuclear doctrine. In East Asia, it is theater ballistic missiles of North Korea and southern China, which cause concerns and drive TMD efforts by the United States and Japan. However, North Korea's WMD and missile capability is far from clear. Unlike the former Soviet Union, China is not a comparable nuclear power vis-à-vis the United States, nor is it a party of the ABM or SALT/START treaties. Due to this essential asymmetry between the United States vis-à-vis China and North Korea, MAD doctrine basically does not work in the strategic sphere. Rather, actual use of tactical nuclear weapons can be considered as James Mulvenon argued, "the weak link in the deterrence chain is instead the automatic credibility of US resolve to use nuclear weapons at the conclusion of one of these asymmetrical interactions with a smaller state in a strategically significant or even volatile region like Asia or the Middle East" (ibid.: p. 3).

Even after the Cold War, there existed a vague expectation that a limited missile attack with WMD against the US forces and US allies would trigger strategic retaliation by the United States. In a sense, there was a kind of 'strategic ambiguity' concerning the US extended nuclear deterrence, even after the Cold War. However, MD deployment would make it clear that limited missile/WMD attack in a regional conflict is different from a situation in which US strategic nuclear retaliation would be employed. In other words, MD is employed in a situation in which extended nuclear deterrence is less effective than deterrence of attack

¹⁶ James Mulvenon, 'Missile Defences and the Taiwan Scenario', Report 44, A. Henry L. Stimson Center/CAN NMD-China Project, 17 January 2002, p. 3.

against the United States (Wilkening 2000, op.cit. p. 15). But, this in turn may ‘de-couple’ limited warfare from strategic warfare, by demarcating regional conflict into geographically confined area. Certainly missile attack with nuclear warhead is too provocative, and thus less likely. However, if the ‘demarcation’ of the conflict is expected due to MD deployment, could not it be a viable option for a desperate adversary to resort to limited missile attack with conventional or even biological or chemical warheads? Modern big cities are basically so vulnerable to any subtle distortion (e.g. malfunction of lifelines, infrastructures) that even a very limited attack could cause intolerable damage, which could then escalate into warfare, as we have seen in the anti-terrorism operations in Afghanistan after 11 September 2001. Thus, expectation of the demarcation effect could eventually cause miscalculation and misjudgement on the side of the aggressor in favour of the actual use of limited attack, which could eventually escalate into larger scale warfare. Essentially, deterrence is a psychological mechanism, and thus how new military capability such as BMD affect this psychological mechanism, is a critical issue that deserves thorough scrutiny.

Implications of US New Military Doctrine

In the recent *Nuclear Posture Review* (NPR),¹⁷ the US Defence Department named North Korea as “chronic military concerns” and China as “a country that could be involved in an immediate or potential contingency” (NPR Excerpts: 3). Since the United States withdrew its theatre nuclear forces in 1991, the DF-21A and other Chinese theatre nuclear forces do not have the US counterpart in the region against which they ought to have a second-strike role.¹⁸ This could be one reason why the Pentagon pointed out in the NPR, the Taiwan Straits as one of the examples of “immediate contingencies” toward which the US must be prepared for nuclear strike capabilities. If MD is operational in the future, it is primarily MD which is expected to counter initial attack by adversary’s short-range and medium-range ballistic missiles (SRBM/MRBM). At the same time, the NPR poses “new mix of nuclear, non-nuclear, and defensive capabilities” and “greater flexibility” with respect to nuclear forces and planning: “Advances in defensive technologies will allow US non-nuclear and nuclear capabilities to be coupled with active and passive defense to help provide deterrence and protection against attack, preserve US freedom of action, and strengthen the credibility of US alliance commitments” (*Nuclear Posture Review*[Excerpts], 8 January 2002). The NPR also emphasizes the possibility of actual use of tactical nuclear weapons for “greater flexibility”.

Furthermore, the Bush Administration emphasizes the option of pre-emptive actions: “The US has long maintained the option of pre-emptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction – and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act pre-emptively” (*The National Security Strategy of the USA*, The White House, September 2002, p. 15). As a result, availability of new advanced military technologies combined with new “flexible” military doctrine against post-Cold War ambiguous assessment of threats, make the future course of armed conflicts more unpredictable and potentially dangerous due to more probability of employing armed forces, albeit the scale and strategy vary widely, which is the

¹⁷ ‘Nuclear Posture Review [Excerpts]’, Submitted to Congress on 31 December 2001, ‘Nuclear Posture Review Report’, 8 January 2002 (<http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/policy/dod/npr.htm>).

¹⁸ One reason for China’s deployment of short-range and medium-range ballistic missiles would be that “China seeks to de-couple the US from its allies in the region, especially Japan and Korea, by using the threat of theatre nuclear weapons” (Bates Gill, James Mulvenon & Mark Stokes (forthcoming) *The Chinese Second Artillery Corps: Transition to Credible Deterrence*, 2002, Washington DC: A. Henry L. Stimson Center.).

consequence of the combination of missile defence and “flexible” employment of tactical nuclear forces in the context of regional conflicts

Missile Defence and Nuclear Deterrence in Asymmetrical Regional Conflicts

Retrospectively, nuclear deterrence did not fail during the Cold War. This does not, however, mean that nuclear deterrence is effective in post-Cold War regional conflicts which are basically asymmetrical. Missile defence, as a new weapon system, complicate perceptions of threats and deterrence. A common understanding is that deployment of missile defence likely evokes the other side’s incentives to strengthening offensive nuclear missile capability, as was the case with the US reaction (increase of offensive capability such as multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicle/MIRVs) against the Soviet’s deployment of missile defence systems in Moscow during the Cold War. However theoretically, if missile defence were well combined with substantial disarmament of offensive capability, missile defence might facilitate further disarmament (as the case with the START Treaty), ultimately enhancing conversion from offensive- to defensive-posture.¹⁹ For instance, in the current North Korean nuclear crisis, Japan’s commitment with missile defence development certainly helps Japan abide from rushing to offensive option, i.e. nuclear armament. In the same token, if Taiwan has significant missile defence capability, it does not have to rush to nuclear armament option in spite of China’s increasing nuclear-capable missile threats. For non-nuclear actors like Japan and Taiwan, missile defence may be a legitimate measure of defence against threats of nuclear missile attack.

It is a popular counter-argument to criticise missile defence as “offensive” combined with the US offensive capability. This argument is heavily affected by the legacy of the Cold War-rhetoric and MAD doctrine which assumed missile defence as “de-stabilizing”. As was discussed in the above, in the post-Cold War era, regional missile crisis will not necessarily (or unlikely) escalate to strategic nuclear exchange. If any nuclear weapons were employed, that would be primarily tactical nuclear weapons. If the US re-deploy tactical nuclear weapons in the Asia Pacific, that will be likely submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM) which is much less vulnerable and supposed to survive *without* missile defence. Thus, in a regional missile crisis in the Asia-Pacific, theatre missile defence (TMD) by Japan or Taiwan would not make the US theatre nuclear deterrence particularly more or less vulnerable. Therefore, China’s argument that “missile defence will make the US nuclear deterrence less vulnerable, and thus first-strike by the US more likely” is short of logical grounds in the theatre level. This argument seems to derive from confusion between nuclear deterrence of strategic-sphere and that of theatre sphere.

On the other hand, if missile defence is combined with more vigorous and excessively offensive capability of the parties involved, it might make offensive outbreak of missile crisis more likely. In post-Cold War regional conflicts, nuclear deterrence may not be effective against asymmetrical adversaries anymore. Indeed, missile defence development is an effort dealing with the failure of deterrence, which is plausible in post-Cold War regional conflicts. The NPR now poses a doctrine more in favour of actual use of tactical nuclear weapons in the theatre. With all these factors combined – regional conflicts, demarcation effects incurred by missile defence deployment, and more emphasis on actual use of tactical nuclear weapons –, the risk of actual nuclear warfare in geographically limited sphere may become real and plausible.

¹⁹ “English-speakers have an old saying “good fences make good neighbours”... A stress on defensive weapons is thus analogous to giving all of us in a village good locks, without giving ourselves ways of breaking through the locks of others” (G. H. Quester (1986) *The Future of Nuclear Deterrence*, D.C./Massachusetts/Toronto: Lexington Books, p. 241).

After all, effects of missile defence are double-sided, depending on context. If missile defence reduces temptation of the offensive, it can ‘play an important role in peace keeping and avoiding any repeat of the outbreak of World War I, a war without too much hatred or too many madmen, but a “war nobody wanted”’.²⁰ In an asymmetrical conflict where rigorous MAD doctrine does not apply and tactical missiles might be actually employed by aggressors, it is not more than rhetoric to call missile defence as “offensive”. It is offensive weapons such as tactical ballistic missiles that more likely cause crisis to become wars (Quester 1986: 235). On the other hand, deployment of missile defence may incur ‘demarcation effect’, which might lower psychological threshold of adversaries in favour of actual use of tactical missiles in regional crisis. Thereby regional crisis may easily escalate to regional missile exchange, in the worst case, involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In the Asia Pacific, Japan and Taiwan’s deployment of TMD against tactical missile threats, would secure US military commitment in case of missile crises in the Taiwan Straits or in the Korean Peninsula. This is because missile defence can partly relieve the US from too heavy responsibility of strategic nuclear retaliation in regional missile crises. However, this also implies that Japan and Taiwan respectively, together with the US forces in the region, have to assume primary responsibility in dealing with regional missile crises. While missile defence may reduce temptation of the tactical missile offensive, ‘demarcation effect’ of missile defence might easily escalate missile crises once the deterrence fails and actual missile attack breaks out.

Concluding Remarks

What we see now is a dangerous combination of new strategy, new military doctrine and new weapon technology. Nonetheless, the United States is implementing this dangerous combination of new military doctrine and weapon technology, assuming that these scenarios apply only to regional conflicts far remote from the US mainland. Also, other large states such as China and India may tend to underestimate impacts and risk of use of theatre missiles in a regional conflict. The international society tends to expect that missile crisis between India and Pakistan be confined to the geographically limited area. In other words, only with the confidence that deadly scenarios of missile exchange and nuclear warfare are confined to geographically limited sphere, the decision-makers dare to initiate such an offensive strategy. However, there is a sincere inquiry to such an assumption based on dangerously optimistic and wishful thinking. The world has witnessed that the “limited attack” of September 11, unspeakably horrible and criminal against humanity though, has evoked global actions and radical change of military doctrine. In the highly globalized world system, even a limited military action could incur economic catastrophe and political/social anarchy. More importantly, since modern metropolitan cities are so vulnerable that even a limited missile attack could be devastating for countries and people in the region in question. Over-confidence of new weapon systems and increasingly offensive and “flexible” military doctrine attracting increasing number of decision-makers worldwide, make the overall dynamics far more volatile and dangerous. It is therefore urgently needed for countries in the region to create a regional framework for threat- and risk-reduction and confidence building, before dangerously offensive options are employed by any aggressive actors. Since missile defence complicate logic of nuclear deterrence in asymmetrical regional conflicts, more vigorous political and diplomatic efforts are important as well as reasonable military readiness.²¹

²⁰ G. H. Quester (1986) *The Future of Nuclear Deterrence*, D.C./Lexington/Toronto: Lexington Books, p. 249.

²¹ “Deterrence is likely to succeed if the defender follows a firm-but-fair diplomatic strategy, and likely to fail for defenders following conciliatory or bullying strategies. Similarly, tit-for-tat policies of military actions are usually successful, whereas excessively firm or cautious policies are not” (Jack Levy, ‘Quantitative Studies of Deterrence Success and Failure’ in Stern, Axelrod, Jervis & Radner (eds) *Perspectives on Deterrence*, 1989, Oxford University Press, p. 116).